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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AN INQUIRY INTO LEARNING THROUGH WRITING

by

BILL TALBOT

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled AN INQUIRY INTO LEARNING THROUGH WRITING submitted by BILL TALBOT in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

David Dillon
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Date October 11/88

ABSTRACT

Much professional literature suggests that language is a powerful tool for learning and that writing can play a specific role in this area. Although the literature indicates that learning should be an important function of writing in school, very few studies have examined the little writing for learning that does occur in schools, nor have they attempted to describe the context in which it happens.

The purpose of this study was to describe how the experience of writing was shaping students' learning and to describe the classroom context in which this was occurring.

Effort was made to find a junior high school classroom where writing for learning could be encouraged and to modify the environment to further promote it. Key informants were also carefully chosen in order to find those who were most likely to use their writing in order to learn.

In order to find how writing was shaping learning, student writers were observed in the process of writing, their writing products were examined and the students were also interviewed. Assertions were made about how students' writing was shaping their learning and these were checked with the students. In examining the context of the writing, descriptive observations were made, and the teacher and students were interviewed to discover their perceptions.

The study indicated that the informants used their writing to deal with private concerns, to purge and clarify feelings and to solve personal problems. Writing also aided

some students in generating and clarifying ideas, led them to question previous assumptions and raise further questions, and aided in some decision making.

The informants indicated that they needed an environment which allowed much freedom in topics, audience, and purpose in order to use writing for learning. Findings also indicated that the teacher's beliefs and strategies matched in many ways with what much current professional literature describes as good contexts for learning to write and writing to learn. Even in this environment, however, the writing for learning which occurred was a small part of all writing done by the students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

> ...it turns out that those very features of the written word which encourage awareness of language may also encourage awareness of one's own thinking and be relevant to the development of intellectual self-control, with incalculable consequenses for the development of all kinds of thinking... (Donaldson, 1978, p.95)

Writing has long been taught in schools, but the possibilities for what writing can do for the writer have never been fully developed. While schools have traditionally concentrated on helping students use writing largely to communicate effectively, they have seldom consciously promoted the other major function of writing; that is its role in helping students to learn.

A great deal of literature suggests that there is a strong link between language and learning and that writing plays a unique role in this area. Because our thoughts and experiences are symbolized by words, we use language to represent the world to ourselves. Since we also use the structure of language to classify and organize and thus to see relationships among our thoughts and experiences, language also helps us to learn about the world by shaping our experience with it. We also use language to share what we have learned with others, but as we share these experiences and thoughts, we make choices about what to share and the language to use and we also get input from others which makes us adjust our thinking. In this way, language helps us to further shape our thoughts as we communicate so that we use language to learn as we communicate just as we use language to communicate what we have learned.

Writing, because it is a very concrete and permanent form of language, allows us to examine and manipulate our ideas in a different way from talk and thus it can play a very important role in both learning and communication. When we write our thoughts down, we can go back over them to examine them to see if they make sense, and we can physically manipulate them to create new ideas. This process usually begins as we "rough draft" our ideas for ourselves in informal expressive language where we have the freedom to hypothesize and shape our ideas without worrying too much about who will be reading it. However, as we revise our writing to make our ideas more explicit for a specific audience, we often further shape them and thus also learn while we communicate through writing.

Because the connection between language and learning is a relatively new area for educational research and particularly for practice in schools, however, very few studies have looked at the use of language for learning in schools. While a few studies have examined the role of oral language in students' learning [for example, Berry(1982) showed grade five students using exploratory talk across several subject areas in order to explore meanings of school tasks and introduce new content relevent to the task and Searle(1980) examined five grade ten students using talk to aid in classifying and narrating for learning] virtually none have looked at writing as learning. Indeed, the few studies that have looked at writing for learning in schools conclude that it seldom happens.

Britton(1975) for example, in his study of sixty-five British secondary schools, found writing being used for very limited purposes. An examination of 2000 pieces of student writing found that the vast majority up to the end of year five was for reporting, recording and classifying information, while very little was used for speculating and theorizing. Writing, which Britton classified as being used to explore new ideas made up only six per cent of the writing in year one and declined to four per cent by year seven.

Britton also found that the students perceived a very narrow use for their writing. They considered that their writing was done for the teacher in the role of an examiner about half the time. They also felt that almost all of the rest of their writing was done for the teacher but in a teacher/learner dialogue. The study did not find any samples where students saw themselves as an audience for their writing.

Applebee et al(1981), in a study of grades nine and eleven in two American schools, over a twenty-five week period, found similar limited uses of writing. In the first place, they found little writing occurring at all, with only three per cent of students' class time and homework assignments in all subject areas involving writing, and less than three per cent of the observed and homework time involving the writing of a paragraph or longer. In addition, forty-eight per cent of the writing samples were informational writing to the teacher as examiner.

In the follow-up national sample of teachers' attitudes toward writing, writing tasks assigned and related instructional activites, 750 ninth and eleventh grade teachers across subject areas and nominated as good teachers by principals were surveyed. Seventy per cent of these were found to stress writing about subject area information in writing assignments while sixteen percent were primarily concerned with personal experience. These teachers also stressed a very limited audience for their students as eighty-eight per cent of all writing samples supplied by the teachers were classified as intended for teacher as examiner and fewer than ten per cent of teachers in the national sample reported that student writing was read regularly by other students.

Three studies done in Canada found very similar results. Jackson(1982) looked at the writing of 259 grade seven, eight and nine students in three schools. This study also found that students wrote very little during the course of a typical school day, producing an average of 214 words daily over all subject areas. Fifty-five per cent of the items consisted of less than ten words while the mean length of all items comprised 23.8 words. The writing in this study tended also to be rather limited in scope as sixty per cent of all writing was in response to questions, with student essays, stories and poems making up less than ten per cent of the items. Purpose and audience for the writing was also very limited with students using eighty-six per cent of their writing to demonstrate information with ninety-three percent of the writing apparently intended for the teacher as audience. In addition, the study showed that 87.5% of the writing required students to transcribe information or ideas from other sources while less than five per cent involved creating an argument or creating literary expression.

Fillion(1979) looked at sixty-eight students in grades seven to thirteen in three schools over a two week period. Forty-three per cent of the writing in all subject areas was directed(answers to text or teacher questions) while a further thirty-one per cent on average was copied. Only twenty per cent of the writing in two of the schools and thirty-six per cent in the other school was classified as undirected(showing some degree of original thought).

McTeague(1980), in an extension to Fillion's study, examined 125 students from grades nine to thirteen in one school for nine days. He had very similar results, finding that students wrote on average two short pieces of writing per day. Approximately one third of the writing was copied, with eighty-five per cent of all writing consisting of short answers, mathematical calculations, test items, short notes, definitions and simple exposition. The majority of this writing was also for the teacher as examiner and written to demonstrate acquisition of information.

Not only is the type, purpose and audience for writing in schools stereotyped but Searle and Dillon(1980) also found the teachers' response to student writing very limited. In examining the written responses to student writing of twelve grade four to six teachers in five elementary schools, they discovered that sixty-nine per cent of the comments were to form while only thirty-one per cent were to content. In addition eighty-four per cent of the comments to content consisted of a general comment which was not directed to anything specific in the writing and eighty per cent of all responses consisted of checkmarks or didactic corrections.

A. PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

These studies show that schools tend to use writing almost exclusively as an evaluative tool where students write in order to record information or to demonstrate that information or skills in the subject area have been retained, but that little writing to facilitate learning of subject matter is evident. By focusing on using writing primarily for demonstrating what the writer already knows, the schools have often neglected to allow the writer to discover what he knows, what he does not know and what he needs to know. Similarly by focusing on the surface features of writing such as correctness of form, structure and mechanics, rather than on the composing, schools have tended to emphasize knowing about writing rather than using writing to help the writer know more about that which he is writing.

However bleak the outlook, the research that has been done shows that there are a few cases where students are using writing for purposes other than demonstrating information for the teacher. Few studies though, have followed up on this to examine the writing that these students are doing and how it relates to their learning, nor have they examined the classroom context in which this type of writing occurs. The purpose of this study, then, is to examine one junior high school classroom where students' learning is being shaped by their writing, in order to describe what the experience of writing is doing for the writers and to describe the context in which this is happening.

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How is the experience of writing shaping the students' learning?

What is the classroom context like in which this is occurring?

C. METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out using an ethnographic approach in order to best understand the meaning that the experience of writing had for the participants and to best understand the culture of the classroom in which the writing was occurring. An attempt was made to find a classroom where writing for learning would be encouraged and to choose student informants who appeared most likely to be using writing in this way. In addition, classroom activities were designed specifically to encourage students to use their writing in order to learn. Students were observed in the process of composing, their writing products were examined and the students were interviewed about their writing and about their perceptions of the teacher's actions. In addition, the teacher's interactions with the students were observed and she was interviewed in order to discover her beliefs and perceptions. Further interviews with the teacher and key informants were made after data analysis in order to confirm any hypotheses.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The related literature suggests that not only is there an important correlation between language and learning, but that writing has an important role to play in this relationship. James Britton is representative of, and has greatly influenced much of the thinking in this area as he has developed his ideas by drawing from theorists in linguistics, psychology and philosophy alike. Since Britton is considered to be a benchmark of thinking in the area of language and learning, a synthesis of his ideas will be used as the basis for the theoretical background to this study.

A. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LANGUAGE, LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION

Britton suggests that we use language as one way of representing the world to ourselves. Events we participate in are represented, structured, organized and internalized in words which are symbols for these experiences. Since language contains such relationships as sameness, opposite and consequence, we not only use it to store experiences but also use its structure to organize and classify them. By helping us to categorize our experiences, language allows us to see relationships between them and thus allows us to interpret and make sense of them.

Through these categories, we build up a framework by which we interpret the world. As we encounter new things, we need to make sense of them so we relate them to what we already know. Because we encounter a vast array of new experiences, it is impossible to attend to and thus make sense of all of them, so we need to select from and shape the new experiences in order to make them meaningful or fit them into our world view. Through language, we can hypothesize and create expectations so we are able to build into our framework or world view those features of our environment for which we have expectations. In other words, we attend to those things for which we can make meaning based on the representational framework of our past experiences. In this way then, we not only represent experiences through language but we also shape them, and this shaping also allows us to see relationships between isolated events, and thus see meaning in them.

In addition to helping us to make sense of anticipated experiences, language helps us to shape experiences that we have attended to. We need to do this when we find that an experience does not fit into our framework or into the way that we interpret the world. Since language allows us to store our experiences symbolically, we are able to go back over these representations of experience and change them in order to make them more meaningful to us. In some cases we may change our representational framework or world view that we have built up through previous experiences in order to accommodate the conflicting information. For example, when a child encounters insects such as mosquitoes, he may come to believe that insects are a nuisance to man. However, a story about bees making honey may force him to re-evaluate this construct and adjust it so that he can accommodate the new information that insects are useful to man. He may adjust it so that he comes to believe that some insects can be useful and others a nuisance or the new information may lead him to think about other aspects of insects' role in nature, such as their place in the food chain and he may change his world view to believe that all insects are useful in some way. In either case, his construct system has had to change in some way to accommodate this new conflicting information.

At other times, rather than changing the framework, we may need to work on the way that we represent the experience in order to make it fit. For example, some children believe that because the sun is always there when they travel, that it follows them around. This is probably because this representation of the experience fits into their world view that events always happen in relation to them. Therefore, they have represented or "languaged" the experience in such a way that it fits into this construct system rather than changing their world view to accommodate the new experience.

In these ways then, we use language to learn about the world through representing experiences symbolically, and by making relationships between these symbols in order to create a way of interpreting experiences and by constantly adjusting this framework and adjusting the way we represent the world to ourselves in order to learn more about the world around us and the way that we relate to it.

We also use language to share with others the way that we represent the world so that language is used not only for learning about the world but also for communicating what we have learned. These twin functions of language are of course not mutually exclusive but are in fact inexorably intertwined. We learn through language even when our primary motive is to communicate. As we communicate, we get input from others about the ways that they interpret the world and therefore we need to go through the process of accommodating the experiences of others in our world view. In addition, as we share our experiences with others, we further shape them by choosing which parts of the experience to tell about and by selecting which words and structures to use and thus we shape the experience as we share it.

The interdependence of these twin functions of language-- learning and communication-- are demonstrated by Britton in his model of language functions. He sees what he calls expressive language at the core of both the learning and communication functions of language. Expressive is the language which is closest to us, the language we feel most comfortable using because it is tied closely to the context of what we are doing. It is informal language, much of which is implicit because it is often for ourselves. If it is for an audience, it is for people we know well and is dependent on their knowledge of us or what we are referring to. Because in expressive language, we don't need to worry about form and conventions and about organizing our ideas and explaining ourselves, it is what we use to deal with experiences that are unfamiliar to us or to rough draft new ideas. We can be hesitant, less precise and less explicit because we assume that our audience knows about us and what we are referring to. Therefore we are able to hypothesize and wonder through experimenting with language until we discover what we are trying to say.

As young children, we begin with expressive language and as our language situations become more complex and explicit, our language develops. We need to use language to explain, to persuade, to tell stories and as we use it to fulfill these functions, we become progressively more adept at using it differently. We learn to organize ideas in different ways, to make fewer assumptions about our audience's knowledge of us and thus make our meaning more explicit, and we learn to use different forms and pay more attention to the conventions of language in order to communicate our ideas to a wider, often unknown audience.

As we develop these skills we move away from expressive language in either direction along a continuum depending on the function we need language to fulfill. If we wish to use language in order to participate in the world or get something done, such as inform or persuade, we move toward what Britton calls transactional language. If, on the other hand, we use language in order to recreate experience and to look back on our own or someone else's experiences as a spectator, we move the other way from expressive toward poetic language. If we move far enough toward poetic language, we create a verbal object, or a piece of literature. In Britton's model then, language is used to communicate in two different ways. At one end of the continuum is transactional which we use to participate in events, and at the other end is poetic which we use to reflect on events after they are over. However, since expressive language is at the core of both we also use language to shape our experiences while we are using it to communicate.

As our language develops these other functions, we do not give up expressive language. Not only does it serve a highly developed function of communication in its own right, such as in informal converstions and personal letters, but we often use it when we are struggling with ideas or dealing with things we are not very familiar with. For example, we often begin writing expressively to rough draft our ideas, even if our intention is to eventually produce a piece of poetic or transactional writing. Here also, it is not simply a one way movement from expressive language to poetic or transactional as we further shape our ideas in order to communicate with others but we move back and forth along the continuum as we alternately struggle with ideas and shape them toward a specific form. The following diagram with lettered examples is one way of representing how this movement along the continuum can happen.

poetic....B......A......expressive....C........transactional

Examples A and B are two drafts of a song written by Steve, a fifteen year old boy. He had no definite ideas of what he would do with the song once he had finished and had not even decided if he would show it to anyone. He was writing primarily for himself because he liked to write songs. Example A is the first draft in which he jotted down any ideas that came to his mind in order to remember them and select from them later when revising.

Example A

What started as a life has grown up to a depression
it affected us tremendously
They endure the pain that you enflict
push them much to far no theres
no stopping them! the Damage
is done is it worth living a live thats
not filled with fun.
Chourus It happens so quick right
before your eyes it Doesn't give
you time to realize That it
can hurts a lot A lot to
make all the pain inside to
come to an end.
So you gave them all your love
So why can't you understand
you don't have their future's
planned
You have made your mistake

it's only you who make's
it ache. inside where its
Dark and cold

Since Steve was attempting to create a piece of literature, example A is on the left side of the continuum, however it is still very close to expressive writing. While he has used some of the conventions of a song-- stanzas, some rhyme, a chorus, a sense of rhythm in places and some imagery-- the writing is still basically expressive. It is for himself and an audience who knows him very well. The writing is also very informal. It is essentially a jotting down of ideas before they are fully formed. These are fragments of ideas in no specific order and with little relationship among them; and as such, there is no sense that the piece contains a whole meaning. The writer is struggling with fragments of meaning, attempting to create a whole. Finally, there is little attempt to use form and conventions to make the piece understandable to a wider audience.

Steve's revision is more polished.

Example B

Life starts out young and brave
who knows it may end up in a grave.
You give them lots of love
and give them all your care but its
the pain inside that they cannot
stand to bare.
Why Does it happen why Do they

end a life. Bad emotions the solution
not a knife.
Chorus
It happens so quick right before
your eyes it doesn't give you time to
relize. That there living in fear
They're pain is real they hurt
a lot to make all of itcome to end.
Now there lives are over gone
the start of a new Dawn.
Throw away your feeling Don't run and
Cry cause your life's not over you'll
probably make it by.
The future was so good but now its
not there. Tell somebody Do think that they will care.
because it happens so quick
right before your eyes. They made
you believe all there lies. So please
Don't cry or Don't run and I'm safe
right here though your not by my
side

The second draft is further along the continuum toward poetic because we can see that Steve has shaped the ideas more into the form of a song. The content is much more developed and put in order so that he has crafted what he wants his song to say, rather than listing his ideas as he tended to do in the first draft. In addition, he has paid more attention to making the rhyme and rhythm work, developing form and structure to make his song more suitable to a wider audience.

At he same time, one can see in the song the tension between the writer discovering what he wants to say and shaping the piece to say it effectively. Thus the movement on the continuum back and forth toward each function, expressive and poetic. We can see the writer's ideas changing as he shapes his language into the language of poetry. The lines and words change as he changes his ideas so that the whole meaning changes as the piece develops. He begins the second draft in the same note that he ended the first,talking about the pain inside that drives one toward suicide, but with less hostility toward the people and circumstances which may have prompted the act. Through the song the tone continues to change. By line six, it has changed to one of questioning why suicide might happen rather than assuming that it is someone's fault. He seems to have reverted back to wondering why anyone would commit suicide rather than working on the assumption that there is a rational reason; that the person is suffering from depression or from pressure from society or parents. By the end his attitude has changed to indicate that the victim is probably happier than he was in life and a tone of comfort and hope is created.

This new meaning emerged from the writer alternately struggling with what to say and shaping it to say it effectively. As he chose new words which would rhyme, and fit the rhythm, and words and phrases which would effectively express what he felt, the lines changed and sometimes seemed to take him in new directions. For example, it is in line sixteen, "the start of a new dawn" that the mood of the song changes to one of hope. It may be that he chose this line to rhyme with the word "gone" in the previous line, or it may have been a phrase that he remembered from somewhere else and felt that it would be effective here. In any case, it seems pivotal in changing the direction of the song toward its new meaning.

Writing the second draft also helped to trigger memories of other experiences with suicide which Steve tried to incorporate into the song. Writing about suicide caused him to recall a television show that he had watched which explored the issue of the family of suicide victims going on with their lives. This seemed to help him question his original idea, that the victim's family is to blame, and look at the issue from the point of view of those left behind. What he ended with was different from what he saw on television, but also different from the ideas he started with. Thus in moving back and forth between the expressive and poetic functions of language, Steve was able to create a piece of literature which created new meaning for himself as well as expressed a unified meaning for any possible audience.

Example C, from Martin et al (1976), shows the movement the other way on the continuum, toward transactional language where a student is also using writing for both learning and communication. The example is an excerpt from a set of observations made by Nicolette, a second year student in secondary school.

> We put the rabbit on a table. He sniffed around and looked over the edge of the table He twitched his nose and ears and he kept jumping onto a nearby box. Then we put two rabbits together. The Rabbit that we had first put on the table sniffed at the new rabbit, and they stayed close together twitching their ears and noses. Then we separated them they tried to get around the book which was dividing the table in two they tried to get over the book and sniffed at the bottom and edges of it. We then let them go back together again, they didn't seem to take any notice of each other. So we think that Rabbits communicate by twitching their ears and nose. If they are frightened they jump and wiggle. We think that rabbits when they are alone and twitch their nose and ears are communicating lonlyness, and when they are frightened they wriggle their tails and jump. They communicate freindliness when they lick and nibble one another.

Martin describes the writing as transactional but with expressive features.

> The writing is dominantly transactional, focussing

> on what is happening but we think that Nicolette's interest and involvement in what she is observing comes through. She goes further than just recording what she sees, she thinks about it and tries to work out its significance.(Martin et al 1976, p.75)

The writing, therefore, is transactional in that it is done to communicate what Nicolette observed as well as to report her conclusions. In addition, it is also suitable for a wider audience than the self or someone who knows the student well, since conventions of written language are followed to a great extent and the observations are explicit. This is quite different then, from expressive notes to record things for one's self. However, a number of expressive features are also present. The conclusions are rather tentative as one can see her trying to work out what her observations might mean, rather than simply reporting her conclusions. The language is also informal and tentative indicating the use of language to work out meaning for the self, which is more of an expressive funcion.

From these examples then, one can see that the expressive, transactional and poetic functions of language are not mutually exclusive but that we often move back and forth along a continuum of language use in order to work out meaning for ourselves while, at the same time, attempting to communicate this meaning to a wider audience.

B. THE SPECIFIC ROLE OF WRITING IN LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

Within this shaping of learning through language, writing plays a unique role. Britton(1971)suggests that because writing is more premeditated than speech and because there is a greater time lapse between utterance and reception, that the shaping process may be deeper, sharper and fuller. When we write, we are drawing on experiences that we have already shaped and interpreted through language and further shape them by writing them down. This shaping of experiences by writing is related to two features which are different from talk, writing's concreteness and permanence. These features of writing allow us to generate new ideas and extend thinking by creating new relationships among our ideas, making our them less vague and abstract and by helping us question our assumptions.

The fact that writing is permanent may allow us to generate new ideas. Donaldson(1978) suggests that since the mind can think only of one thing at a time, writing the thought down stores it for us so that it is not forgotten and allows the mind to think of other, perhaps related or more specific aspects of the idea.

Secondly, writing may help us to consciously reflect on and theorize about our experiences. Murray(1984), argues that writing our ideas, feelings and experiences down allows us to stand back from them, examine them and see significance in something that is close to us. This separation of our thoughts from ourselves may allow us to view them in a more detached way or become observers of them, and thus we may be able to theorize about them in a way that we can't while talking or thinking.

Beyer(1979) suggests that the permanent nature of writing also allows us to revise our views. Since writing is a graphic record, it allows us to look back over our thinking to see if it makes sense to us and to change those things that don't. In addition, shaping our ideas in writing in order to share them with others helps us make them less abstract and vague. In communicating, we are often forced to include more details and examples in order to explain what we mean to someone outside of our immediate context. Our ideas thus often become more precise as we clarify them for ourselves in the process of writing them for someone else. Writing for another person may also lead us to question and re-examine some of our assumptions. In anticipating the comments, questions or arguments of the reader, we may need to re-examine what we had always taken for granted and never questioned.

The fact that writing is concrete is another reason that it may shape our learning. Emig(1977)argues that writing consists of concrete symbols of our ideas, and Van Nostrand(1979) suggests that writing is a process of creating relationships among these ideas. While writing, we reorder, structure and restructure and thus physically manipulate our ideas. Van Nostrand argues then, that as the writer composes, he creates new relationships between these bits of information many of which never existed until the writer created them; and further that writing allows the writer to become aware of these relationships. Therefore simply by writing, the writer knows more than he did before he started.

Writing may help us to reflect on ideas and information received from others. Britton(1980)argues that we don't really understand ideas unless we can put them into our own words. When we use writing to think about ideas we have read or heard about, we often translate the ideas into our own words and thus make them more personal. This may help make the ideas fit into our framework by which we interpret experiences, as well as allow them to connect more easily with other experiences we have had. We may then understand them better.

Some literature suggests that shaping writing toward the poetic mode serves a specialized function in our learning. Martin et al(1976) believe that the poetic mode gives different types of insights. Knowing through poetic writing allows one to see not so much through a linear, logical set of connectives but is instead, a subjective view of the world where we explore our feelings about and our place in the world.

Because poetic writing is often a reshaping of real experiences, it may also give us new insights into these experiences, helping us to clarify them. Britton(1972) says that in poetic writing, the writer offers his value system up for examination and in order to compare it with others, and in doing so clarifies it for himself. One way that we can compare our values with those of others in addition to offering them in a way that invites a response, is to write in the roles of other people. By creating fictional characters, we can experiment by attempting to see what the world might look like through the eyes of someone else, thus helping to expand and clarify our own view of the world.

In addition, poetic writing can help us to resolve inner conflicts and feelings about our experiences by helping us to reshape them. One way we do this is to include conflicts or problems from our own lives in our writing by either putting ourselves into a story or including real conflicts for one of our fictional characters to deal with. According to Martin et al(1976), since in writing about experiences we have the power to change the events or our reactions to them to whatever we want, we may resolve the problem or our feelings about an experience to our own satisfacion, thus turning a painful experience into an enjoyable story.

The poetic function is also important because, as Britton (1982) says, it gives us the freedom to daydream, reflect, and contemplate without the pressure to do anything about it. Where transactional writing is language to get things done, by persuading, explaining or reporting, poetic writing is to reflect on past experiences or to imagine and thus stretch the bounds of possibility. Therefore in poetic writing, relieved from the pressure to convince or explain, the mind may be freed to wander and may go further in imagining the possibilities.

The structure of poetic writing, particularly some poems, may also contribute to this freedom. Where transactional writing lends itself to a structured linear way of setting down thoughts, poetic writing can sometimes focus more on enjoyment of the sounds and rhythm of language so that the thoughts can be more random. Children especially seem to be able to experiment and play with words, allowing this to take them in new directions, without worrying too much about form and structure. In experimenting with the language then, they may structure their thoughts in new ways, allowing them to see things they have never thought of before.

C. RESEARCH ON CLASSROOM WRITING INSTRUCTION

Research by educators such as Graves, Murray, Britton, Martin and Applebee suggests that learning to write and writing to learn develop in conjunction with writers' intentions. Their conclusion is that teachers must first work on students' intention to write, then find techniques to help them develop their writing. However, they also point out that the classroom can stifle student intentions and thus can hinder writing development as a way of both communicating and learning.

Applebee(1981)feels that the learner's intention is crucial and that in many classrooms, the teacher controls too much of the learning. In his view, too many writing tasks in schools are mechanical, often requiring multiple choice or short answers. In tasks such as these, where the students are limited to supplying isolated bits of information, their knowledge may remain isolated or detached since there is little need to relate this knowedge to other aspects of their experience. Because the teacher takes over many of the important skills which are related to the subject area learning, the students may come to rely on this structure provided by the teacher and never learn to use their own language resources for working out meaning.

Martin et al (1976) also discuss the importance of intention, calling it the motivating force for thinking and action. However, they also feel that student intentions in secondary schools are fragile and easily become subservient to the teacher's intention. One of the major reasons this happens is because the teacher is often the only audience for the student's writing. They feel that the student's struggle to say what he wants to say is counter balanced by the demands of his audience. The student needs the security and freedom of a non-evaluative audience so he can draw fully on his language resources. In this situation, the audience can slip into the background, as Martin and her colleagues say, "leaving the writer free to pursue the meanings he wants to get down on paper."(Martin et al 1976, p.132)

In schools however, since the writing is initiated by the teacher much of the time, he becomes the primary audience for the writing. When this happens, especially when the teacher is evaluating the writing, the audience is intimidating and remains in the foreground so that the student cannot open up fully nor take risks in order to discover what he wants to say because he is too concerned about pleasing the teacher. It is possible that this happens so frequently in secondary schools because students are more cognizant of marks and they know that the best way of getting good marks is to do what the teacher wants them to do. In addition, many still have the feeling that the teacher knows more than they do so they naturally try to do what they think the teacher wants them to. Thus no matter how good the intentions are on the part of the teacher, if he is the primary audience, it is easy to take over the student's piece of writing so that the student is writing for the teacher's intention rather than his own.

Graves (1985) also sees the importance of audience in either developing or hindering student intentions. He believes that students must write for each other and that their work must be displayed. Students can then more easily develop their own intentions because they write for the satisfaction that comes from sharing their work and seeing their writing in published form rather than writing for the teacher.

Graves(1976) also believes that intention is affected by the type of response given to the writing. He says that writers must be encouraged to seek responses when they need them and must get them from sources in addition to the teacher. In this atmosphere, children take ownership and responsibility for their own learning rather than always relying on the teacher and therefore will have control over the writing process. They are able to develop their own intentions of what they want to say and revise their writing to fulfill these intentions. They write because they have something to say, and through feedback from the teacher as well as peers, they are able to evaluate whether they have got their message across and how clearly they have done so. In classes where the students are dependent on the teacher for responses as well as for topics, and time limits however, they write in order to match the teacher's intentions. According to Graves, revisions are then made, not to develop students' own voice but are an attempt to match what they think the teacher wants.

The type of response can also affect intention because different types of writers may require different types of responses, according to Graves(n.d.) He suggests that there are two types of writers, reflective and reactive. Reactive writers sometimes require rehearsal before writing which can take the form of such activites as drawing, conversation or some type of play. In reflective writers, on the other hand, rehearsal is going on all the time through reading, personal experiences and televison. While reactive writers may need skillful periodic questions to help them develop their intentions, reflective writers can be pushed harder by teacher questions to encourage them to include more information or detail to clarify what they mean. It seems from what Graves says, that since reactive writers' intentions appear to be more fragile, some types of questions at critical times could move the task from the child's intention to the teacher's.

Searle and Dillon(1980) also mention the importance of teacher response in developing the writer's intention. They suggest that an over-emphasis on response to form demonstrates a concern with how things are said rather than what is said and this can shift the focus away from the child's purpose in order to meet the requirements of the form. The child's primary focus in writing is then shifted to getting things "right" rather than on developing what he wants to say.

Martin et al (1976) are also concerned about teacher response hindering student intentions and stress the need for allowing children to use their own language rather than always correcting them. They suggest that if knowledge is personal, and established by means of our own language, then children's language needs to be encouraged as a crucial part of learning. In order to encourage independent learning, teachers must accept this language both in speaking and writing, especially while students are struggling with new ideas. They feel that over-emphasis on errors prevents students from taking risks. Students try to hide what they don't know by relying on the language of the text or the teacher and therefore fail to make connections between their own experience and knowledge and the new information. By using the language of the text or the teacher they report or record the new information instead of putting it in their own words, thus making it their own.

Graves(1983) feels that modeling appropriate writing behaviors can further encourage students to use their own language and take risks. He suggests that teachers must write themselves and demonstrate the craft of writing for the students and secondly that the teachers must have a craftman's view of writing- that it is not "wrong" but merely unfinished. In this atmosphere students can see that the teacher's writing does not do exactly what he wants it to on the first try. They can see the process of false starts, blocks and errors that writers go through as they struggle to make and convey meaning and therefore are less likely to attempt to model what they perceive as perfect writing on their first draft. In addition, if students see their writing as unfinished rather than wrong, they are more likely to take more risks and attempt new things, knowing that they will have a chance to change the writing rather than have it marked wrong. It is in this type of an atmosphere that students can use the writing to experiment and hypothesize and thus use it as a way of learning rather than use it to demonstrate their learning of information or form.

Choice of topics is also deemed necessary by Graves in development of intention.

> ...writers write best on topics they really care about. Thus free topics allow children to do their best work...An excited writer is one who is not only motivated but also receptive to new ideas and techniques. The Atkinson data showed that children working on topics of special interest often acquired several new concepts in one burst. (Graves and Stuart 1985 p.90)

Ownership and learning can therefore come with the freedom to chose what to write about since students can then write about what really interests or concerns them. If they have to write about what the teacher deems is important, it is difficult to develop their own intentions.

Martin et al(1976) also believe in the importance of freedom for students to explore topics and, according to them, the teacher must then find ways of helping students without imposing a structure on their thinking. They suggest that this might be done by allowing the student the choice and freedom to explore a topic, while the teacher attempts to detect underlying themes. The teacher must also refrain from criticism until the student gets the topic under control. After this, the teacher may challenge the student or give alternate opinions.

Martin and her colleagues also feel that teachers can assist children by helping them see connections between what they already know and the new knowledge they encounter:

> If he can encourage his pupils to find the points of contact between the unfamiliar and the known, in terms of their own needs and interests, he will be helping them to extend their insights into the world around them and their own relationship to it, which after all is what teaching is all about. (Martin et al 1976, p.83)

Thus if teachers encourage students to make this connection in their writing, they can then more easily use it to help them learn.

However, although Martin and her colleagues think that classroom climate is important to the development of writing to learn they also suggest that another very complex set of influences is at work in each piece of writing. How the student views himself as a learner influences how he uses writing and this is dependent not only on how the present teacher views or treats him, but is also dependent on past experiences with other teachers and students, and with past writing experiences. Therefore a child might be in a classroom environment which encourages learning through writing but may be inhibited from using it in this way because of previous experiences, or because of misinterpretation of the teacher's intention. In this way, according to Martin et al, wrong language policies can prevent learning but the right policies don't necessarily produce it.

D. SUMMARY

Language is a powerful tool for learning. It allows us to represent our experiences symbolically, to classify and see relationships among them and therefore interpret and make sense of them. We also use language to share experiences, but as we share, we also shape them and thus language is used to learn while we communicate. According to Britton, this is so because expressive language which is the language of learning is at the heart of both of the major communicative functions, transactional and poetic. As we shape our language toward the transactional or poetic functions in order to communicate, we also often discover what we want to say in the process, and thus we move back and forth on the continuum away from and toward expressive language as we work out meaning for ourselves while we attempt to communicate this meaning to others.

Writing plays a specific role in learning because it is concrete and permanent and because there is often a greater time lapse between utterance and reception. Writing can allow us to store ideas in order to free the mind to think further, can help us distance ourselves from our experience in order to allow us to theorize, can allow us to put others' ideas in our own words so that they can connect more easily with our own experiences and can allow us to physically manipulate our ideas to put them into new relationships and thus create insights.

Research into writing instruction suggests that writing to learn and learning to write are best encouraged where the two functions interact and where student intentions are encouraged. Student intentions appear to be quite fragile and are affected by their past experiences with writing so that strategies designed to encourage learning through writing may not always be effective. Teachers can however, encourage learning through writing as well as writing development by providing a variety of audiences for student writing and not overemphasizing their own role as examiner. Teacher response to writing should emphasize content as well as form and the teacher must take care not to push students too hard and thus take over ownership of the task. In addition, modeling appropriate writing behaviors, providing a choice of topics, encouraging sharing of students' own experiences, and using their own language, encourage good writing as well as the use of writing to learn.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. RATIONALE AND ASSUMPTIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHY

In order to examine what the experience of writing was doing for student writers and to describe the context in which this was happening, it was necessary to attempt to find the meaning that the experience had for the participants. For this reason, an ethnographic approach was used.

The ethnographic approach to research assumes that in examining the social world we are studying not only facts, events and data within our observational field as we do in studying the natural(physical) world; but we are examining facts, events and data which have already been selected and interpreted by our informants. As Schutz argues,

> ...The constructs used by the social scientist are, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by actors on the social scene, whose behavior the scientist observes and tries to explain in accordance with the procedural rules of his science.(Schutz 1962, p.6)

Schutz defines the selection and interpretation of facts and the assumptions man makes about the way the world operates, as his common-sense thinking or his taken-for-granted meanings which allow him to function in everyday life. Secondly, he argues that man functions in the world by basing his actions and interpretations of the world on his stock of knowledge which is grounded in his own personal experiences as well as those of his predecessors which have been handed down to him. The job of the researcher then, is to observe his informant's actions and behaviors as well as talk to his informant in order to understand his stock of knowledge which determines those behaviors.

Schutz also argues that man's actions in any social situation are meaningful to him in terms of his motives. These motives are of two kinds: "in-order-to-motives" which are the projection of his actions before the fact and which are based on his knowledge at hand, and his "because" motives which explain what determined him to do what he did and are based on his knowledge on hand after the event. Schutz then argues that in observing any action, the observer cannot know the total context of the action, but only the fragment he observes; and in addition, that if he does not share the stock of knowledge which is taken for granted by the insiders, he may see the action as nonrational. Thus it is important for the observer to attempt to see the action from the point of view of an insider and attempt to determine the actor's "in-order-to" and "because" motives to see the event as meaningful within the larger context.

Schutz also suggests that, while performing the act, the actor has only his "in-order-to motives" available to him. Therefore only when the event is over is he able to examine his "because" motives and then only as an observer of himself. In addition, he claims that the actor cannot have knowledge of his actions while performing them, since as soon as he thinks about what he is doing, the present has become the past; that is, he has completed the action. Thus the actor cannot have total explicit knowledge of his own actions. However, it is possible for an observer to see and think about the actions of another while they are in progress. Therefore the observer can describe this action and present it to the participant in order to attempt to determine his tacit knowledge. It seems important then, for the observer to be an outsider as well as an insider in the social situation in order for him to understand it.

Spradley(1980) suggests that the way to alternate between this insider and outsider experience in order to find the underlying meaning beneath the taken-for-granted assumptions is through participant observation. Agar(1980) suggests that in entering the field in participant observation, the reseacher is placed in a situation where he does not know the rules and what is expected of him, and as his assumptions are stripped away he may be able to understand the situation in a new way.

Rapport is also essential if the observer is to enter into what Schutz calls a consociate relationship with his informants. This consociate relationship, according to Schutz(1962), is the best chance to grasp the individual uniqueness of our fellow man and see the other's thoughts as they are built up step-by-step. Thus in participant observation, the researcher participates in the culture as an insider in order to attempt to observe his informants while sharing some of the stock of common knowlege and seeing the motives of his informants from a consociate relationship. However at the same time, he also participates as an outsider who can sometimes see things that are taken for granted by the insiders.

Through participant observation, according to Spradley, the researcher makes inferences about cultural knowledge (the stock of shared knowledge) by observing his informants' behavior, artifacts(what he uses) and speech messages(what he says). He suggests that the inferences are at first hypotheses but that they are tested over and over until they become relatively certain descriptions of the cultural knowledge. This making and testing of hypotheses is done by making descriptive observations, interpreting the data and checking it through further observation.

B. DESIGN

This study was carried out using an ethnographic approach and took place in a grade eight language arts class over a six week period. Finding a local junior high classroom where the teacher was consciously encouraging students to use writing as a way of learning would be difficult, according to the results of the research studies cited earlier. It was therefore necessary to find a classroom where the writing program provided a possibility that students might be using writing for this purpose even though it was not being consciously encouraged. I felt that this possibility would be greatest in classrooms which met the following conditions:

1. Students wrote for purposes other than to demonstrate acquisition of information or writing skills.
2. Students had some choice in the writing tasks so that there was a possibility that the writing was being done to meet their own intentions and not just the teacher's.
3. Students had the opportunity to write for audiences other than teacher as examiner.
4. Focus of instruction was on content of the writing and not only on form, structure and mechanics.

A junior high school language arts teacher who met this criteria agreed to participate in the study and we worked together to choose one of her five classes to observe. Assuming that students who showed the most interest and involvement in their learning would be most likely to use their writing as a way of learning, we observed the two classes which fit into the times available to see in which one students seemed most eager to discuss issues, bring in personal experiences and volunteer responses. In addition, the writing of students in both classes was examined for evidence of voice and amount and types of revisions since we also felt that evidence of a personal voice in the writing showed the student's involvement in the task, while revisions, particularly to content, showed evidence that the students' ideas were changing as they wrote and that the writing may have been contributing to these changes.

The class chosen consisted of twenty-seven students of mixed ability from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds. At times the students sat in rows, facing the front of the classroom and at other times they were moved into pairs or small groups for activities which required discussion or collaboration. Some of the activities which were done in small groups were prewriting discussion, peer editing and revision and response to literary selections. The teacher stood at the front of the class to talk to the entire class and during whole-class discussion but moved around the room talking to groups or to work with individual students while the students were writing or talking. Oral directions to the class were often supplemented by writing the directions on the chalkboard. Samples of student work along with posters and pictures were displayed around the classroom. Students had been writing journal entries on a regular basis once a week all year and the teacher read and responded to the journals of all classes every week.

The teacher organized the curriculum around thematic units which integrated reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing activities. During the unit which I observed she stopped having students writing in their journals because she felt that she didn't have enough time to read and respond to them with all the other writing they were doing. In addition, she felt that she didn't have enough marks for the report card, since the school policy required that student marks for each reporting period be based on between five and ten major pieces of student writing. The teacher indicated that she needed to give students more assignments that could be marked so that there wasn't enough time to do journals as well.

Once this class had been selected a further attempt was made to create a suitable environment for learning through writing to occur. A unit on "Dilemmas", planned in cooperation with the teacher, was designed so that students could read, talk and write about dilemmas which would be interesting to them and relevent to their lives. We assumed if students were encouraged to do some decision making through dealing with dilemmas, if they were encouraged to write about the dilemmas and if not all the writing was marked, that they would take some risks in their writing and that they might use it to come to some of the decisions. The unit then, included some literature in which the characters were faced with physical and moral dilemmas. Students were then asked to discuss the characters' choices, encouraged to put themselves in the places of the characters and discuss what they might do in their places and to think about similar types of dilemmas they had been in. Students were also encouraged to imagine dilemmas they might encounter and discuss what they might do. In addition, students were asked to write about these dilemmas in a variety of forms including journal entries, poems and stories.

Initially Audrey, Michelle, Colin, Jackie and Valerie were chosen as key informants on the basis that their writing showed the most voice and revisons and we felt that these five students would most likely be using their writing for learning. In the course of both the observations of the class and the examination of the writing of all students however, it became clear that learning through writing was occurring for some of the other students while it was not happening for some of the key informants. The focus of the observations on how the writing was shaping the learning was then changed to those students where learning through writing was occurring and Audrey, Joey, Paul, Michelle, Tanya and Teresa became the key informants for this part of the study. In examining the context of the writing, however, the original key informants were retained and the new informants were added, thus making nine key informants for this part of the study.

In order to see how the writing was shaping the learning for the six key informants in the first part of the study, I observed them during the process of writing, examined their writing products and interviewed them. Some were interviewed before writing in an attempt to determine what their intentions for the piece were, what they were writing about, why they were writing, who it was for, and how they would attempt to fulfill their purpose. They were then observed in the process of writing and a description was made of what they were doing and how they were going about it, with any pauses and changes noted. The students were then interviewed again after the writing episode to discover why changes were made, and what they were thinking about or doing during the pauses, to see if their intentions changed as the writing progressed and to see if the writing did anything for them in shaping their learning.

Since this process was very time consuming, it was possible to focus on only one or two students for each writing episode and so samples of writing were also collected from other students and examined for evidence of major changes in the direction of the writing. Students who made these changes were then interviewed in order to find the reasons for them, as well as their reasons for writing and what the writing did for them. In addition, during the course of the interviews, I discovered that some of the students were using writing at home in order to help them solve personal problems and deal with powerful feelings, so these students were asked to bring samples of their writing. The samples were then analyzed and the students were interviewed in a manner similar to that of the school writing.

In order to understand the classroom context in which the writing was occurring, I participated in the class both as a teacher and as an observer of the teacher and students. As a participant, I attempted to become an "insider" and share in the common stock of knowledge, by taking part not only in planning the unit, but also in planning lessons, teaching some lessons and responding to students' writing. In addition, I participated as an "outsider" by observing the teacher's and students' actions and the interaction in the class.

Since I also felt that it was necessary to understand the teacher's intentions, how the students interpreted the teacher's actions and to discover the teacher's and students' beliefs about writing and learning, I interviewed the teacher and informants to understand their "in-order-to" and "because" motives. I therefore interviewed the teacher in order to determine her beliefs as well as to determine what she intended to do in the class and how she might go about it. I then made descriptive observations of her actions and discussed them with her in order discover her perceptions of the lesson and to compare what actually happened in the class to what she had planned and find reasons for any changes. I also interviewed the student key informants in order to discover their beliefs about writing and to understand their perceptions of what the teacher expected as well as their interpretations of her directions, advice or questions.

In addition, I attempted to make inferences about what was happening and test these inferences while I was observing. Data analysis was therefore ongoing during the period of observation. Descriptive notes of the classroom observations as well as the interview transcripts were analyzed for recurring incidents or common assertions made by the teacher or students and these were then listed. These were then checked through further observation and by further interview. Hypotheses about what was happening were then made, checked through further observation and presented to the teacher and key informants. This was done not only in order to further test the hypotheses but was also an attempt to help make the participants' tacit knowledge of the situation more explicit and thus learn more from them. Once this was done, I felt that the hypotheses had become relatively certain descriptions of the classroom context in which the writing was being done.

Analysis of the way writing was shaping the learning of the students was done in a similar fashion. In addition to observing the process and products of writing and interviewing the students about changes in their writing, the informants were also asked what writing in general did for them. These effects of writing were then listed and specific pieces of writing were analyzed for evidence of these results. Any hypotheses were then tested by checking them with the informants. It was possible to check some of the assertions in this way, however it was difficult to check all of them since in order to do so it would be necessary for the informants to have explicit knowledge of their own mental processes. Some of the assertions, therefore, were made as descriptions of how the writing shaped the students' learning while others were left as less certain hypotheses.

C. SUMMARY

In order to understand how the students' learning was being shaped by their writing it was necessary to understand the students' mental processes and thus to attempt to understand what was happening from their point of view. In addition, in order to describe the classroom context in which the writing was occurring, it was necessary to understand what the teacher was attempting to do as well as to understand how the students interpreted her actions. Because an ethnographic approach examines experience from the point of view of the participant as well as from that of an outside observer, it was felt that this would be the most useful approach.

The study was designed to set up the best possible classroom situation for learning through writing to occur. A teacher was chosen whose beliefs and strategies matched those which the professional literature suggested should promote classroom learning through writing. In addition, the class which demonstrated the most involvement and interest in writing was chosen and within this class, key informants who demonstrated some use of writing for learning were chosen. Finally, a unit designed specifically to encourage the students to use their writing to think through problems was set up. In order to discover how the writing was shaping the learning, student writers were observed in the process of writing, interviewed, the writing products were examined and the writers were interviewed. In examining the classroom context, descriptive observations were made, and confirmed with the teacher, and the teacher was interviewed in order to discover her beliefs as well as her perceptions of what she was doing. Nine key informants from among the students were also interviewed in order to discover their perceptions of the teacher's actions. The data was analyzed and assertions were checked through further observations and by confirming them with the teacher and students, until the hypotheses became relatively certain descriptions.

IV. FINDINGS: THE NATURE OF WRITING FOR LEARNING

The students in this study used expressive, poetic and some transactional writing, both in school and at home, in order to explore and come to terms with issues and relationships which were personally important to them. Through these kinds of writing they were able to discover, and understand feelings and extend their thinking. Some of the students began writing from their own intentions, out of a need to write to deal with an urgent personal concern. This writing tended to be done outside of the school context. Some writers, however, did not do this type of writing at all, but instead took school tasks which initially incorporated someone else's intention and adapted them so that they took over ownership of the writing and were able to extend their thinking about issues of personal relevence. Most students used poems and songs in order to deal with their concerns, however, journals and stories were also used to some extent.

A. AUDREY

Audrey wrote songs or poems at home when she felt a need to express her feelings. The writing acted as a release for her feelings and, thus, she often felt better after writing . She also used this out-of-school writing to help her explore her feelings and to help her think about problems and issues that were on her mind, and in one case, to come to a decision about a personal concern.

Audrey's use of writing as a release for her feelings is evident in one piece of writing where she expressed frustration and anger that had been building up inside of her.

> Anger, Anger throbs through my bones, just like throughing sticks and stones.
>
> The stupid vaccume cleaner isn't working, my stomach ackes and my head is hurting.
>
> Pain, Pain rushes through my veins like a blood on a tilted plane

Her need to express her feelings in writing is evident when she discusses her reasons for writing.

> I was just mad-- just mad at everything-- and mom wasn't in the greatest mood and she asked me to vacuum. I was trying to vacuum but it wouldn't pick up the stuff on the rug. I just went into my room and kicked the door and then just started writing.

The writing acted as catharsis for her since writing about these feelings made her feel better. In addition, in helping her to dissipate her anger, the writing also indirectly helped her in her relationship with her mother, at least in the short term:

> I felt a lot better when I came out. And I guess once I was in a better mood, my mom was in a better mood, so it helped us all.

Although it was clear to Audrey that writing about her problem helped her to deal with it, she could not articulate what it was about the writing that made her feel better. However, several features of the piece as well as what Audrey said about her writing indicate what might have happened.

In the first place, the form of writing she chose to use may have helped her to deal with her feelings. The writing is expressive but is being shaped toward the form of a song or poem and in shaping this poem she used metaphor and simile which are powerful devices for developing precise images. Creating these images to help her describe how she felt may have made her more aware of what she was angry about so that, rather than simply feeling general anger at the world, the images may have specified the anger for her and thus allowed her to focus on what was bothering her. Thus it appears that a heightened awareness of her problems might have given her some power over them so that she was able to dissipate her anger.

The permanent nature of writing may also have helped her to identify the bad feelings and reasons for them. She indicated that writing sometimes stored ideas for her in a way that talk could not do, since talk is not permanent. Once the problem was written down, she could go back over it and this sometimes triggered more ideas, thus extending her thinking.

> ...you think harder when you write it down-- like otherwise you think about it then forget about it-- but if you write it down, you sort of remember it

> and maybe you write later and remember that and use it ...it [reading it over] usually triggers something else... you get more and more ideas."

One can see where this may have happened in this piece of writing. While the first line is an expression of how badly she feels, the second line is a listing of reasons why she is feeling so badly. Thus writing down the first line may have triggered more ideas for her about the reasons for her anger. The writing may also have crystallized her feelings so that she was able to become aware of what was bothering her. Rather than going over the same feelings in her mind, writing down how she felt could store the problem for her, clearing her mind to think further about specifically what was bothering her. Once she had done this she would feel better about her problem; because, rather than merely feeling general anger, she had identified the source of her unhappiness and felt as if she had done something about it.

Audrey also recognized that writing for herself allowed her to express herself more than if she were sharing her feelings with someone else. "I think that when you're having a conversation that you don't share as much as when you write a diary." Thus since this writing was intended to be completely private, Audrey felt no restrictions on what she was able to put down on the paper. In this way the writing was able to act as an outlet for her feelings whereas in talking to someone else about the problem, she may have felt more inhibited and not been able to express her feelings explicitly.

In another instance, Audrey wrote about a relationship and in this case, the writing not only provided an outlet for her feelings but also made her think more about the relationship and come to a decision about it.

Dilemma between the Head and the Heart

Don't talk anymore
We just see each other in the halls
My heart goes out to you at each sight
But its time I let him go though
I don't want him to leave
He will always be a part of me

Her reasons for writing were similar to the first piece. She was upset about a relationship, this time with her boyfriend and felt a need to write about it. She described how she came to write this song.

> I was going out with this guy and then he broke up and he didn't talk to me. That really hurt. I just like him a lot ...When I wrote this song, I was listening to this song, like this is a title of a song-- well it's not a title but it's one line in a song by Chris DeBurgh. I was just listening to the song and it made me think about it and I just wrote.

In describing what writing about this did for her, she indicated that writing about the relationship helped her discover what her true feelings about it were:

> ...it made me think about it...I thought -- well if

> he doesn't want to talk to me then he probably doesn't like me. Then he started talking to me again. It just made me think--is he worth all this worry.

The decision she came to shows up in the second stanza of the song. She suggests that it was here that she came to terms with her problem: "That's where I decided- well I still like him a lot but he's just not worth worrying about- just let him go on his own and don't pester him or anything."

When Audrey told why she wrote the song, she indicated that writing about the relationship did more for her than simply thinking about it. "When I started thinking about it I just started to cry because I was so upset.[but writing] I just got it out."

Like the previous piece of writing then, this poem also "stored" her problem for her so that her mind was clear to think more in depth about it. In this case, the writing allowed her to purge her feelings so that she was able to sort through the problem and make her decision, while simply thinking about it made her sad without really dealing with the problem.

B. MICHELLE

Like Audrey, Michelle used writing to help her deal with her feelings and make her feel better. She also wrote a number of poems outside of school for this reason.

Michelle's sense of how the writing helped her was also in some ways similar to Audrey's. One poem was written because she was upset at conflicts with her parents as well as with a peer at school.

I don't understand,
why can flowers grow
after rain?
Why can grass turn green
after a storm?
Why can't people know,
the feelings of hurt,
after a fight
I don't understand
why strangers can love me,
and my parents can't.

In explaining her reasons for writing this poem, she expressed a sense of being overwhelmed by her feelings and by not being able to understand why people close to her were acting the way they were.

> For one thing my dad's transmission broke down and we had to pay a whole bunch of money and I have to get glasses and we don't have enough money for it-- so everybody's been in a bad mood and my mom's been sick and in a bad mood-- and "I'm not in a bad mood but just upset because of it all-- that's part of the reason-- and then there's this girl that goes to the school and she's trying to steal my best

> friend... it's kind of a question about I don't understand why people get mad... I go to youth group sometimes and everybody was upset with-----because her family's better off and I got upset because my dad and I don't get along and this guy before he left he said 'I love you I really do' and that's why I said 'I don't understand why strangers can love me and my parents can't.

When Michele talked about what writing poems did for her, she indicated that simply writing for herself about "bad feelings" helped her to put them out of her mind so that she didn't have to think about them anymore.

> It just kind of empties out the feelings and makes me feel better about it all....just putting your feelings down on paper instead of just having them-like most of the poems I wrote seemed to to be sad--instead of holding it inside, I just put it down on paper and it makes me feel better.

In addition to purging the bad feelings, the writing helped Michelle to think more about her feelings and the reasons for them. She used her poem to pose questions about the things that were bothering her and to wonder about her situation. She indicated that writing served a similar function for her as talk did. It externalized her thoughts and feelings and allowed her to sort them out much as talking to her friend did for her. It also provided a safe environment for her to express herself and thus say everything she felt, and having it "out" seemed to free her mind to go deeper into the problem:

> Well when I think about it, they just all mix up in my head and there's only one person I can really talk to about it that will understand --he's an older guy and he lives far away so I can't really talk to him about it so I just write it down.

Michelle not only recognized that the writing made her feel better and helped her to think about her problems but also recognized that it was her reading over of the poems that contributed most to her thinking: "...it [reading her writing over] helps you think deeper into the problem."

In this case then, it did not seem to be the changing of ideas around on the page to create new ideas which led her to see things in a new way, since she did very little revising on these poems. Rather, it seemed that the act of recording her thoughts on paper in an ordered way so that she could examine them led to her insight. She wrote as if the thoughts were directly from her subconscious mind and she was not aware of what she had written until she read it over:

> ...if I'm in a sad mood, I just write down-- I don't think about it, it just comes out. I don't think about it, I just write one line and from then on, I'm just writing and I don't even know what I'm writing. Then when I'm done, I read it and I find out what it's about.

Writing about her problems in the form of a song or poem may have contributed to Michelle's new look at the problem. In using an image or an extended metaphor, she put her question into a larger context. She began by wondering why violence in nature creates beauty or good, then wondered about human relationships in the same way and finally moved to a personal view, putting her own problem into the same type of question. It was perhaps the putting of her own problem into a broader perspective that helped her to think about it in a different way; and, thus, she had some insight into it and was beginning to deal with it, even though she was not yet able to answer the questions.

C. TERESA

Teresa also wrote poems about her feelings and like Audrey and Michelle, she wrote poems at home when she felt a need to purge strong feelings or the need to think about a problem. In one poem, Teresa was able to discover an answer to a problem by writing about it.

Every single blade of grass
and every flake of snow
Is just a wee bit different
there's no two alike you know
From something small like grains of sand
To that gigantic star.
All were made with this in mind
to be just what they are

How foolish then to imitate-
How useless to pretend!
Since each of us came from a mind
whose ideas never end
There'll only be just one of me
To show what I can do
And you should also be quite proud
There's only one of you.

In discussing what writing this poem did for her, she said that she was trying to figure out why she didn't have many friends in this school and in writing the poem, she decided that she just had to be herself and the kids would like her. Like Michelle, Teresa used the form of a poem to put her problem into a larger perspective by beginning to write about nature, then fitting her problem into it. Hers, however, is written about in a more general way as she does not refer directly to what is troubling her. Instead she writes about the solution, that differences and individuality are good in all things.

The form she wrote in was also important to Teresa, as it was only poems that helped her discover her feelings. In discussing why she liked writing poems at home, she said, "It just tells me how I feel inside. If I write a story I know it won't tell me how I feel, but you write a poem you're getting all your feelings out."

Teresa also recognized that writing seemed to do more for her than talk. It was able to help her externalize her feelings and sort them out and also provided a concrete record of her thinking. This allowed her to go back over her ideas and think more about them, while in talk the ideas were gone as soon as they were uttered:

> "It's different when you write everything down cause then you read it over and over but you can't really think back on a conversation...if it's a problem or something, it [reading it over] helps you understand what the problem is and you can figure it out.

D. TANYA

Tanya did a little writing at home as well but also used some school time to write about a pressing personal concern, although it was not part of any school task. During a time when the class was involved in a large group dicussion, Tanya began writing about a topic which was unrelated to the topic being discussed and as soon as she finished writing, she showed it to me and asked if I could understand what she meant.

Confused
Sometimes I'll stop thinking
and I get a weird feeling
that Im being watch.
This feeling is awful to me
it terrifies my thinking about
people and the rest of the world
My feeling is very difficult

> to understand
> I have tried to explain to others
> but only a few sorta understand
> it!!
> I'm very terrified because this
> Feeling is unknown and noone
> Can solve it
> For me

Tanya usually found talk easier than writing as a way of helping her to solve her problems.

> Sometimes you can't write things down though, some things are maybe too long to write on a piece of paper and you think, 'oh I don't want to write this down' --like when I have a really bad problem, I go to my friends, sometimes my parents--but it's much easier when I just tell them.

However, once faced with a problem that seemed so complex that she didn't seem to be able to talk about it, Tanya attempted to write about it:

> I thought having this feeling is something maybe other people have but I didn't know that and I wanted a solution to this and wanted to know why I felt this way or why I'm having this so I thought maybe writing it down, since I couldn't talk it to somebody because it's too hard to understand-- maybe writing it could explain it.

While she, like Michelle, Audrey and Teresa, wrote in order to clarify her feelings, Tanya's purpose was slightly different. The other girls wrote in order to purge bad feelings, or in order to discover how they felt, while Tanya seemed to know in her own mind exactly what the feeling was, but was writing in order to seek validation for it and in order to find out why she felt this way. In addition, the way she used the writing was slightly different. The other girls used the writing itself to help them understand their feelings or discover solutions to their problems while Tanya used the writing in an attempt to help her talk about her problem more effectively. She tended to use talk more than writing as a way of dealing with her feelings and her problems and thus she tended to use writing in order to share her feelings with someone else rather than using it directly to sort them out or help her to think about them. Writing then, became a way of communicating her feelings in order to talk about them rather than a way of discovering them.

The type of writing Tanya did was also somewhat different from that which Audrey, Michelle and Teresa did. While all the other girls used expressive writing which was being shaped toward the poetic, Tanya did not seem to be creating a piece of literature. Although the form looks like a poem, Tanya did not create a metaphor for her feeling or put it into a larger context as some of the other girls did, but instead attempted to write an explanation of her feeling. One can see, when she wrote how she felt about her confusion, her attempt to explain it in a form of written down talk. "This feeling is awful to me" and later "I'm very terrified because this feeling is unknown and noone can solve it for me".

The writing is expressive since it is like a conversation written down, as if she were talking directly to the person she was writing to, but does not seem to be moving toward the poetic since she attempted to explain her feelings in a rational way in a participant rather than spectator role.

Tanya also did not seem to have the same awareness of what writing could do for her that the other girls had. While the others talked about the writing getting rid of "bad" feelings or helping them to think about their problems, Tanya never mentioned these outcomes. The closest she came to this was when she talked about writing to share her ideas with her friends, "I can write my feelings down and share them with my friends and they can understand them."

Writing about her problem didn't seem to work as well for Tanya as she never seemed to be able to explain exactly what she meant, either in writing or in talk. One reason why the writing may not have worked as well for Tanya is that she did not have the same understanding or experience of the personal potential of writing and thus was not as adept at using it to help her explore her feelings. Another reason why the writing was not very effective may be related to the way she used the writing. Attempting to explain her feelings to someone else instead of writing for herself may have prevented Tanya from just letting go and losing herself in the writing, with ideas coming from the subconscious as happened at times with the other girls when they discovered an insight into their problems.

While Tanya did not think that writing about her problem helped her very much in understanding or solving it, there was some benefit to her. By putting her feelings down in a concrete form in order to share them, understand why she had them, and seek validation for them, Tanya was able to find a starting place for talking about her fears in order to allow someone else to understand and help her:

> Well no one knows what this feeling is, I don't think. Well, I know what it is. I was trying to write it down but it didn't really work...it worked a little. You figured it out.

E. PAUL

While some of the informants experienced discovery primarily in their writing outside of school-assigned tasks, Paul experienced it only through writing which was done for school purposes. He discovered while writing about a personal dilemma that the writing helped him to think more about the consequences of a situation he often found himself in. In this piece of writing, the students were asked to write about a personal dilemma that they had found themselves, real or imagined. Before they wrote they worked in small groups to come up with some possible ideas to write about. They were also asked to try to think of all sides to a question before coming to a decision of what to do. Students were asked to write in whatever form seemed appropriate for their dilemma and some different forms were suggested by students during class discussion. Paul wrote,

> The lights were bright and the music was loud but my own thoughts and inner arguements out did both of them. I was at a dico with muy friends, they were just about to leave for the pizza place and were urging me to go with them. Scott the person who was driving had had a couple of beers and was just a little tipsy but he looked okay. This was when I started to think of all the consequences. First, I said mom told me to be home at 11 and it was 20 to 11 now so if I went I wouldn't be able to make it home on time. Whould my friends understand if I went home without going to the pizza place or would they bug me about it all my life? What would happen if Scott had an accident and I was in the car. I would probably be in tons of trouble. Just then Scott left shutting the door and saying rather loudly, "hurry up if you're coming." I returned the answer by saying "Just a moment I be there in a second." I thought about what whould happen if I was late. All the consequences flashed before my eyes in seconds each one more horrable than the first. Until I came to the only logical

> solution the only one where I would feel great about myself. I opened the heavy hard carved oak door and waved to my friends and said sorry.

In this piece of writing, Paul created a story into which he placed himself as the central character. He started writing with no real idea of how it would go or how it would end, but simply began by choosing a setting he was familiar with and described how it looked and sounded. He then added the dilemma that his friends were there and wanted him to go with them but one of them had drunk a couple of beers. He said that he really did not have this in mind when he started writing but put it in, in order to add a little flavor. The dilemma that he needed to come to a decision about was one that he had found himself in before -- that he had to be home by a certain time but felt some pressure to go with his friends.

In talking about the piece of writing, Paul claimed that it was the only piece of writing that he had ever done which helped him to understand or make a decision, and discussed how it helped him:

> It makes me think twice when I do something- think about all the consequences...it helped me think about everything that could happen...how I could get in trouble, get in a car accident, my dad could find me down at the police station--it wouldn't be very good--who knows what will happen on the street--maybe run out of gas or something.

One of the factors which may have helped Paul use this piece of writing to make a decision is related to the way he went about structuring the writing. Although it is essentially a narrative which is on the poetic side, it has transactional features, such as where he thinks about the consequences of his actions by looking at both sides of the argument.

> First, I said mom told me to be home at 11 and it was 20 to 11 now so if I went I wouldn't be able to make it home on time. Would my friends understand if I went home without going to the pizza place or would they bug me about it for the rest of my life? What would happen if Scott had an accident and I was in the car? I would probably be in tons of trouble.

Here, one can see him thinking about both sides of the dilemma before returning to the narrative where he makes his decision. In addition to listing some arguments for both sides of the question, Paul wrote about his decision being a logical one, which also indicates that he looked at the problem in a systematic way in order to decide which value was most important to him. "...I came to the only logical solution..."

This use of rational argument and logic within the narrative may have helped the discovery to take place. Listing arguments for both sides of his dilemma allowed him to see them in concrete form and this may have helped him decide, since he could go back and examine and compare them which may have been harder to do in talk or in just thinking about the issue. At the same time, putting himself into a story allowed Paul to write about an issue which was important to him while looking at it from another perspective. It may have been almost like a form of role playing in which he was able to act out the situation in the role of a character and thus see it as an outsider, yet still deal with something that was part of his everyday life. It may have allowed him to become a spectator to his own problem and thus experience it from another point of view.

It is also possible that writing rather than talking was useful because it allowed Paul the freedom to explore the issue privately. If he discussed it with his friends, he may have been ridiculed and it may also have been difficult to discuss it with his parents since it involved liquor and he was under age. However, since he needed to show the writing to no one else it could provide him with a forum to work out the arguments and find a soution without worrying about what other people might think.

F. JOEY

Like Paul, Joey did little writing on his own outside of school and had never experienced any sense of discovery through his writing before. In two of his school-assigned tasks, however, he became quite excited about what writing was doing for him. The writing that Joey did was initiated by the teacher and it was initially not something that he was interested in doing. As he wrote, however, he was able to take ownership of the task and become very involved in it. As he wrote, ideas began to come to him from other pieces of literature; and as he put these ideas down, the scope of the writing began to change so that by the time he had finished, he was questioning and wondering about issues which went far beyond what he had originally been writing about.

The two pieces of writing were related and arose out of a story the students had written about a physical dilemma they had experienced or could imagine. After writing the story, they were asked to try to turn it into a poem. Before doing this, however, they listened to the titles and summaries of three short poems about dilemmas, then wrote which they thought they would like best and why. After sharing their ideas with the class, they listened to the first stanza of each and discussed related personal experiences then jotted down any questions they had about the poem. Students then listened to the rest of the poems and worked in small groups to generate questions that were not answered by the poems and came up with some possible answers. After discussing their questions and possible answers with the class, students again worked in small groups to examine the poems to come up with some similarities and differences and to discuss whether or not they were all poems. This led to a discussion of what a poem is and how it is different from other forms of writing. Joey became very involved in the discussion and was one of the major participants. The following class, students were given the opportunity to follow up the discussion by writing about what makes a poem. Joey was one of the students who chose to write about thissubject and wrote by thinking about what had been said in the previous class and by trying to think of new points to make.

1. A poem is usally trying to get a meaning across to you. So they make it so you have to find it and explore it.

2. The best peoms are the ones no one, but the writer, understands. A good poem can usually change someones outlook on life.

3. Story can be about everything like the cat next door. But poem gives you an innocent outlook on a problem or a theory. 4. Stories are sometimes from the outlook of God. So everything is there, they are facts. But the poem, as I said before is from an innocent outlook. So fact are given as observations and are indirect.

5.

Students were then asked to write their own poem. Before doing this they were given a copy of a poem written by Rob, one of their classmates, who had gone ahead and finished his poem already. The students again worked in small groups to generate questions that were not answered by the poem then asked Rob these questions. After this, they were asked to look at the form of the poem and discuss any features of it they noticed. Students were then asked to write their own poems using ideas from their stories. Joey wrote,

Death

The distant wolves howled in the night
a moon beam shined through the scattered clouds
fear pushed me further and further
I ran for an aimless goal
footsteps chased me in the darkness
terror was around every courner
in every decision
in every attempt
I fought to with-hold control
a deadly battle
a losing battle
may the fittest survive by divine right
this made no diversity between good and evil
a classic battle
a constant battle
may thee who lives by the sword,
die by the sword echoed
with my predator a skilled killer
and me, a mere son of God
I turned around to face death itself

In discussing the writing of this poem as well as the expressive piece of writing about what poetry is, Joey talked about experiencing a feeling of discovery similar to that which he had felt before only in talk or in reading.

> "....ideas may be in people's minds but they get stirred up- that's what you're doing now [asking him questions]. Ideas are coming to me now and that's what writing the poem did for me...just like reading poems stirs up ideas."

His discussion of what the writing did for him also gives the impression of the ideas gaining more clarity and becoming more concrete as he put them on paper. He gives a sense of the ideas coming directly from the subconscious to the paper so that writing his ideas down seemed to give him a vehicle to make his ideas concrete or give them form so that they become clearer.

> The ideas didn't become clear in my mind until I started writing. I just wrote, just like the poem, I dug up something that I felt that I didn't even know before.

Some of the ideas that Joey "stirred up" in writing the poem dealt with issues that he had been struggling with before. Writing the poem challenged an assumption he had previously made about poetry. He had written "The best poems are the ones no one but the writer understands" but said that after writing the poem, he would change this to "The best poems are those that no one, sometimes not even the writer understands," since he realized that he didn't understand much of his own poem. Writing the poem helped him to see more clearly the complexity of poetry and realize how an image can have a variety of meanings even to the writer.

> I think it's almost all of it. I understand all this [the beginning] it's all physical--the end half--it's there but it's all like a puzzle-- it's all there but there's pieces missing --you can't tell what the picture is.

Writing the poem not only generated more ideas for writing and changed his ideas about poetry, but also led him to think about his own life. He had begun writing by discussing a physical conflict. (lines one to seven) However, as he continued writing, he got away from telling about a physical confrontation. As he wrote, Joey was able to generate more ideas from various sources and these ideas began to make him think about other things. Phrases and images began to creep in from various sources(line nine from a James Bond movie and line eleven from the Bible) and these lines began to move the poem away from more of a narrative account of a battle to a possible discussion of who should live and who should die. By the last line, Joey had begun to think about his poem in terms other than another form for a story about a life and death struggle. He did not purposely change it but had written whatever came to his mind without thinking consciously about it very much. However, once he had written the piece, he began to realize that the last line might mean more than what he had begun to write about. He realized that he had set up a conflict in the poem that he as the protagonist could not win. No matter what he did or what he stood for, he would lose the conflict and die: "I was on the good side but I didn't have a chance. At this point it made no difference what you were and what you were fighting for--I was going to lose anyway." This led him to think about the inevitability of death; that no matter who we are or what we stand for, we all face death eventually.

> The end--this could be two things--I was being chased physically or I was hiding from death inside myself...That's what I was saying about I stirred something up in my mind. I just wrote this--I didn't think about it too much...it stirred up- -it was just like I wrote this and it stirred up that he could be--I realized when I got to school that it was there, it was always there. It's just that its catching up to me...death was always there but now it's catching up to me.

This revelation then led Joey to think about other issues in his life. Issues which were beyond the scope of what he had begun writing about were raised after he had finished the poem. He described how, on his way to school, he was still thinking about the poem and began to think about fate, wondering if events in his life were predestined and that it was simply a matter of time before they happened.

> I thought about that everything in your life was set up--its just a matter of getting to it and which way you're going to get to it...it's gonna happen--it's when it happens and how it happens....

This then led Joey to think about his future and about possible challenges in his life.

> I don't know if this has anything to do with it but I thought that everybody I know has challenged me in some way. I think that some time I'm going to be challenged in life--like a big challenge.

Thus in Joey's case, by leading him to question assumptions and wonder about issues that he had never really thought much about before, the writing was leading to a restructuring of his ideas. He had not yet come to any conclusions but the writing had started him on his way by helping him to think about things in a different way.

G. SUMMARY

All of the informants used writing for similar purposes, to explore personal concerns, but there were a number of different ways that their learning was shaped by the writing. Paul and Joey developed their own intentions within school-assigned tasks in order to clarify ideas, raise further questions and extend their thinking about personal concerns. On the other hand, Audrey, Michelle and Teresa used self-initiated writing, particularly songs, as a type of catharsis when they had very powerful feelings that they wanted to purge. The writing served as an outlet for their feelings and allowed them to explore them when writing about personal problems, such as relationships with parents and peers, so that they often felt better after writing. The writing for Audrey and Michelle seemed to "store" the problem for them and cleared their minds in order to allow them to think further about the issue, and in one case for Audrey, it helped her to come to a decision. For Teresa and Michelle, the writing helped them to clarify their problems. They used the writing to put their problems into a larger context through an extended metaphor which allowed them to view them in a different way. Tanya, on the other hand, used writing in an attempt to clarify her problem so she was better able to talk about it.

In many cases the writing seemed to make tacit knowledge explicit. The students seemed to have the knowledge implicitly and the writing was a way of drawing it from the subconscious. Thus Michelle wrote without being very aware of what she was writing until she read it over and Paul began writing without any idea of what he would write about but was able to generate ideas as he wrote. The writing seemed to bring to the surface, for Paul, a personal concern that had been at the back of his mind but that he not thought much about before. Similarly, although Joey began writing with some ideas in mind, his writing took his thinking in new directions so that he discovered new meaning in what he had written.

The privacy afforded by writing seemed to be important in helping some of the students explore. Thus in writing about pressing personal concerns, many informants wrote at home where they felt they had the flexibility to write about what they wanted, when they wanted and where they needed to show it to no one else. This privacy seemed particularly important in how Audrey's learning was shaped by her writing, since it allowed her to express all of her feelings without inhibition and thus clear her mind; and for Paul who was able to find the freedom in a school assignment to sort out a problem that he would likely not want to share with parents or friends.

The fact that writing is permanent and concrete was also important to the learning of some students. These features helped Michelle, Teresa, Tanya and Paul externalize their thoughts, providing a concrete record of their thinking which they could go back over and further explore.

The form of writing chosen also seemed to be important in shaping the students' learning. Although students wrote some narrative and expository pieces, it was the poems or songs which seemed to help them discover the most about themselves. Perhaps it is the form of a poem itself which allowed this to happen. While narrative and expository writing are dependent on sequence, a poem has no such restriction. Expository writing especially is dependent on working an argument through logically and in a rational way. Poetry, on the other hand generally does not build up the meaning bit by bit but the meaning is contained in the overall effect that the poem creates. It is more of a total experience which is arrived at by the writer or the reader in creating or digesting the whole poem and emerges more as a flash of insight than being built up in a logical or step-by-step process. Since the problems these students wrote about were very personal and the students were quite emotional about them, they may not have been able to think about them rationally. Therefore, writing about them in an expository form may not have helped. However, since they wrote in the context of purging their feeling, without worrying about trying to think about the problem rationally and without trying to make it understandable to others, some were able to create pieces of literature which they could later look back on in order to find meaning. As they created the poems, they also created meaning even though some were not aware of what that meaning was until they read the poem over. The words and phrases they chose for connotation or to fit the rhyme and rhythm, as well as the metaphors and similies they created, helped shape meaning as they created the poem. Some were also reminded of other things they had read, heard, seen and written and this further shaped their ideas as they wrote. Thus some were able to read their writing almost as outsiders so that the images they created allowed them to see things in a new way and understand in a flash of insight the new meaning they had created or had drawn from the surface from within themselves.

V. FINDINGS: CONTEXT OF THE WRITING

A. TEACHER BELIEFS AND STRATEGIES

The teacher of this class felt that writing was very important, and wrote herself for several purposes. She kept a private journal which she used as a way of thinking about personal concerns. She had also written an article for publication in a professional journal, and she wrote in class in order to model writing for her students.

She expressed the feeling that privacy in writing was of paramount importance. In discussing her own journal writing she said that she would never want anyone to read her journal and that, if there was a chance that someone could, she would never write the "same kinds of things" or write in the same way. In her class she had several strategies to ensure her students' privacy in some of their writing. Not all pieces of writing were read and marked. Some were not collected, while some were collected but students were told that the writing was being read only to see what they were doing and how they were responding, but that the writing would not be marked. The teacher did however, feel some pressure to mark much of the students' writing since it was a school policy to have between five and ten major assignments marked for each reporting period and she expressed the concern that she did not have enough marks for the upcoming report cards.

Another strategy the teacher used which allowed the students some privacy was not forcing students to share their writing. She asked for volunteers to read their writing to the class and asked specific students if they would read, but students were told that they did not have to read if they did not want to.

The teacher herself had experienced the feeling of discovery through writing and felt that it was an important aspect of writing. She likened her journal writing to a link to the subconscious where she sometimes wasn't really aware of what she was writing until she read it over. In discussing helping students use writing in this way, she expressed the feeling that school writing was too different from this kind of writing and it would be very difficult to create a situation in school in which there was enough privacy for students to open up enough in their writing to make any discoveries about feelings. She mentioned that students often forgot their school journals in the classrooms so that any student could read them. In addition she felt that using journals for self-discovery in school was a kind of contrived situation. In school, students could not simply do a journal entry whenever they felt the need to write since they would be involved in other tasks. In addition, the journals were set up so that students wrote in them at a scheduled time, and the students might not feel a need to write at that particular time.

The teacher also used the school journals for a different purpose from that of self-discovery. She liked the idea that journals set up a special line of communication between herself and the students and she could learn many things about them through the journals and develop a personal relationship by writing back and forth. In order to have the journals accomplish this purpose she felt that she must read and respond to them on a regular basis and thus the students had less opportunity and less privacy to use the journals for self-discovery the way some used their out-of-school journals.

Another major belief that the teacher expressed was the importance of choices. She felt that alternatives made things more interesting and enhanced thinking skills, mentioning that one of her jobs was to "make the kids think". She also felt that alternatives created an opportunity for students to write about things which were meaningful to them and expressed the feeling that this was very important in their wanting to write.

> There has to be some kind of personal involvement or committment. They have to feel they have an idea that means something to them-- that kind of 'oh yeah' feeling and then they're inspired to write...it's something they feel and want to share ...I'm waiting for something to hit them. It might be something they think of, or something someone else thinks of ... the more ideas there are floating

around, the more opportunity or chance there is to think of one.

In her classroom, there was an emphasis on alternatives and student choice rather than on right or wrong. She had students do a variety of things in order to generate ideas for writing, saying that she wanted to show them that there were a number of ways of getting ideas and she wanted them to use the ones that worked for them and disregard the ones that didn't. In prewriting activities, students worked in groups or individually to generate several ideas of what to write about as well as to generate a number of ideas which they might choose to use in their writing. In addition, she modeled alternative beginnings to pieces of writing by beginning a story on the chalkboard and then giving two other ways of writing it. Students were also asked to write two alternate beginnings to their stories and to choose one they liked best.

Choices were also emphasized in topics and forms of writing although students were not given entire free choice in what to write about or the form to use. Rather they were given some choice within a structured assignment. Sometimes the topic was stipulated but students were given some choice of the form in which to write. For example, in one assignment students were asked to respond to a story by writing in the role of one of the characters and by writing what that character might say about one of her experiences in the story. They were then told that they might use dialogue or letter form in their response. In another instance, a form of writing was specified but students were given some choice in how they might write about the topic. Students were asked to write a story about a dilemma, but it could be a real experience or imaginary. Different kinds of dilemmas were then brainstormed and students were encouraged to use one of them.

The idea of alternatives in purposes and forms of writing was also emphasized more by giving the students a great variety in the types of tasks they were asked to do rather than giving them a free choice. Students wrote for a number of different purposes which ranged from jotting down instructions of what to do in their groups, to personal writing, to extended writing of literature. Students also wrote using a wide variety of forms which included poems, stories, journals, letters, notes, paragraphs, parts of stories, lists, questions, and dialogues.

Focus in response to literature was also on alternatives as students discussed different predictions about what might happen, different actions characters could have taken and alternate endings to stories. Students were also encouraged to ask their own questions of the literature. For instance, in discussing poems, students were asked to work in groups in order to come up with questions they had which were not answered by the poems.

This focus on alternatives through questions was also seen in class discussions. A common strategy was to ask for student responses, then ask for students who had different answers to respond. Teacher response to answers was generally to get students to tell why they thought as they did, rather than to judge the answers right or wrong.

Alternatives were stessed also in examining form and structure of language. While dealing with sentence structure, the teacher had students combine sentences and discuss the various ways they could be combined, rather than focussing on correcting the students' sentences.

The importance of improving writing and the role of revision in this process were also central beliefs. The teacher talked often to her students about the importance of revision, telling them that "changes are good because it means you are improving your writing." She also referred to a piece she had published, and said on rereading it after a time that there were many things she would still change. She encouraged the students to write multiple drafts, saying that writing was never final and that if one came back to a piece of writing, even a so-called final draft, he would still change it if he wanted to do something else with it.

In addition to talking to her students about revision, the teacher also used several strategies to encourage it. She used both teacher input and peer revision in order to help students make changes in their writing. In addition to responding to first drafts with questions and by helping students to identify errors, she encouraged peer input by having pairs of students exchange their writing in order to give advice to each other. Students were encouraged to give advice on what parts of the writing they liked best, as well as to help each other see parts of the writing which were confusing or not developed enough. Sometimes specific revision sheets were used in which specific input was encouraged. After students had revised their work, she had them count the number of revisions they had made. After they had shared their writing, she asked how many students liked each other's revised drafts and how many liked their own revised draft better than the first. In addition to this, the teacher also gave marks for changes in the writing in some assignments.

Although the teacher encouraged much input by others to her students' writing, she felt that they should make the final decision about what to change since she felt that ownership of learning was crucial.

> You can be your own best teacher. Kids need feedback from their peers and they also need some kind of teacher feedback, but the ultimate judge is the person writing it.

Student ownership of their writing was then encouraged as the teacher emphasized that the students should choose to include in their writing the revisions they liked best and not include changes just because someone else liked them. This strategy was also used with alternate story beginnings where students were told to choose the one that they liked best even though they had discussed the choices with the teacher and their peers.

The teacher also expressed the belief that students should be marked on their performance in language skills rather than on their knowledge about language. She talked to her students about this in preparing them for their final exam explaining that there was no list of terms or facts to memorize and drew an analogy to sports where participants were judged on their performance, not given a test on what they might do in certain situations.

The teacher believed that the first respose to student writing should be to content. She said that she tried to stay away from focussing too much on mechanics so that students would not judge their writing by this feature.

> I don't want them to think that their writing is good or bad because of the spelling. A couple of years ago, I gave the kids a writing interview I had and it was 'Do you think you're a good writer? Why? What do you think could improve your writing?' At that point a lot of kids said 'my writing is really messy and I make a lot of spelling mistakes' and I guess I don't want kids to think their writing is good or bad because of their penmanship.

Emphasis in her response to students' writing was primarily on content both in comments and questions and in grading the writing. In responding to student journals, she made comments and asked questions about the experiences the students were writing about and made no comments about or corrections to the writing itself. In addition, her marking of student assignments emphasized content more than expression, organization or mechanics. For example, in one assignment, students were given fifteen marks, seven for content, four for organization and four for mechanics. In giving marks for revisions, she also gave up to three marks for changes to content but none to other kinds of changes. The teacher also encouraged students to respond first to the content of each other's writing by asking questions and making comments about what was said, before giving advice on form, structure and mechanics.

The teacher also made a conscious effort to tie school learning into experiences which were familiar and relevant to students. She said that she tried to "give students a hook to hang things on" in order to make the school experiences more meaningful. This was evident in several activities. The teacher chose literature which she thought would be relevant to students' lives and their interests. In discussing reading selections, the teacher also brought up recent news items which were relevant to the selection and which students might be familiar with. In addition, she frequently asked if students could recall personal experiences which were related to what was being read, discussed or written about.

Another of the teacher's beliefs was having students share their writing. There was an attempt to have the students share with an audience other than the teacher although she expressed the feeling that she was not happy with the amount of publishing and sharing she was having the student do and that it was something she planned to work on next year. Students frequently read their writing to each other, and there was some display of writing in the room as well as in anthologies of student writing which were school-wide publications.

B. STUDENT BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT WRITING

One of the major perceptions of the students interviewed was that they had to be in "the proper mood" in order to be able to write well and in order for the writing to "do anything" for them. Being in the mood to write was dependent on the amount of freedom and flexibility afforded by the (1) topic, (2) purpose and (3) audience for the writing. The amount of flexibility needed however, varied among the students. While some needed complete freedom to develop their own intentions, others were able to take over tasks that were assigned and develop their own intentions.

1. TOPIC

Choice in what to write about seemed to be crucial in developing student intentions. Students who wrote on their own, outside of the school context, found this type of writing easier than school writing and stressed that the reason for this was the freedom to write whatever they wished when they were in the right frame of mind to write.

This freedom in choice of topic and time for writing allowed them to write about issues that were of vital concern to them.

Audrey found that the more choice she had, the easier it was to write: "It's easier when there's more topics because you can write about what you think about the story, like pick a topic that's more what you think."

Jackie was also adamant about needing a lot of freedom in developing her own topics. She felt that this freedom not only made writing easier but also allowed her to develop the writing more and improve the quality. Although she had choices at school, she felt that this was sometimes not enough, that she needed to be able to write about anything.

> Like at school, like if you don't want to write on a subject then you'll do really terribly on it. If you don't want to write on it, you'll just quit-- you don't want to add other stuff and special things, but if it's something you want to write on, you'll just keep going and going and ideas just pop in... it's easier as long as it's not one topic that everyone is writing about-- I hate that...I think when we have stuff like that [choice of topics] we should have anything we want-- like anything to do with it... for example, let's say she wanted us to do a poem or something-- we could just pick whatever we wanted to do instead of her picking a topic.

Teresa also needed a lot of freedom in choice of topics and felt that the writing she did had to suit the mood she was in. Therefore, if she was asked to write about topics that did not fit in with her mood at that time, she would not be able to do the same things.

> You have to choose a topic that suits your mood that day or else it won't work. Like that time I wrote those different poems-- if I wasn't in the mood, I couldn't write something like that.

Michele also felt that the topic of writing had to suit her mood and most of her self-initiated writing was done when she was unhappy, when she seemed to have the need to write about her feelings.

> When I get home-- like if I'm happy or something -- like most of the time I'm in a depressed mood because of something that happens. I haven't got one single happy poem in that. I guess when I'm happy I don't feel like writing, but when I'm sad, I want to.

2. PURPOSE

Some of the students saw writing as very personal and something which could be used to deal with problems or overwhelming feelings. When asked what writing was for, these students talked about its value in sorting out thoughts and feelings. Jackie talked about the value of personal writing in problem solving:

> to get your mind to work... if it's for yourself,

> it's to get your emotions... you're thinking about something that you want to write about--that's actually how you get in the mood-- say if you have a big problem that you need to solve right now so you think 'ok I have to write this down' ...I keep a diary sometimes and just write everything like that...if you have a problem, just write it on paper and it's gone.

Michele initially talked about using writing as a hobby or as a way of filling up time. "Just recently I started writing them [poems] on my own as a hobby or habit or something." In discussing why she wrote a collection of poems, she talked about writing because she had nothing else to do or nothing else she felt like doing:

> I guess I was just kind of bored--something to do with the time I had...I was at home-- I was kind of bored and couldn't figure out what to do so I just started writing-- cause it's the first thing that came to my mind.

However, Michelle also used writing to make herself feel better when she was unhappy. She seemed to have a need to write when something upset her and used the writing to rid herself of the negative feelings.

> It's like when I get home or something and your parents are in a bad mood and they make me in a bad or sad mood so I go upstairs and I can't figure out what to do so I just start writing-- and they end up

> as depressed or sad poems-- it's just what happens at home-- when I get home...it kind of empties out what I'm feeling inside-- I feel better, then I come downstairs and do something else.

Audrey also saw writing as a way of clearing her mind: "The journal you have at home, you write personal things. I just write whatever comes to mind...just to get it out of your mind." In addition to clearing her mind, Audrey saw the value of writing in dealing with her feelings as she talked about how a specific piece of writing made her feel better. "It [the writing] sort of relieved the tension, cause it was bothering me, so I finally just sat down and wrote it down."

However Audrey also seemed to see the writing as an end in itself, in addition to what it could do for her. While the others mentioned only the purposes of writing as ways of problem solving and dealing with feelings, Audrey also talked about writing in order to create something. She talked first about the purpose of writing in developing her craft. "[people write] to express themselves, to practise what they can do."

She then talked about writing being for developing personal experiences and feelings into pieces of literature:

> Writing is also for translating your feelings into something else... say something really minor happened to you--like you stepped on a bug or something, and then you translated that into a real big story...using what happened to you but sort of

expanding it.

Some of the students saw the purposes of school writing as somewhat different from the personal writing they did on their own. They tended to see school writing as a way of recording, remembering and processing information, while downplaying its role in dealing with personal concerns. Jackie expressed the difference as writing in school about information and writing at home about emotions.

> In Social we take notes about someone who died eighteen years ago...we answer questions--just factual kinds of writing...if it's a file or something, it's to get information down, but if it's for yourself, it's to get your emotions.

Tanya felt that writing in the content areas was to demonstrate to the teacher that she knew the information, "...show the teacher you understand. Say you've been getting an assignment out of a book, you'd look for the answer."

Michelle, however, saw writing as a way of showing herself that she knew the information: "You sort of show yourself that you can learn something if you want to learn about it-sort of do better on it."

Jackie also saw the writing as a way of learning or remembering as well as recording the information: "It's kind of like a typewriter. Like when you write it down, it kind of goes in there too- it goes up here [to the brain]." Jackie and Paul both felt that writing the information down helped them to understand it as well as remember it.

Audrey also saw how school writing helped her to develop her thinking:

> Before, I just wanted to get it over and done with but this year I find that I start writing and thinking while I'm writing-- it helps me to think ...now I put more thought to my writing-- like even when you get an assignment, it's still like an assignment but you think more about it.

Most students said that they would or could not do any writing about private matters in school, while Tanya said that she could do this kind of writing in school only if she did not get caught. Audrey felt that she could not use school writing to deal with personal concerns because she viewed school and home writing quite differently: "You're thinking of school as work and when you're at home, you're just thinking about what happened during the day and you write it down."

Jackie was the only student who recalled using a school assgnment as a way of dealing with her feelings: "We had to write about nuclear war. I got out all my feelings about it. It made me think about it."

3. AUDIENCE

Students wrote for a variety of audiences, and the type of audience seemed to make a difference in how the students were able to use their writing. They tended to do more writing for themselves and for selected trusted readers in their out of school writing and more writing for a wider audience in their school writing.

Some students expressed the need for complete privacy in order to use writing to explore private concerns. They needed to write for themselves, with the option of showing the writing to a trusted other person if they chose. Because they wrote mainly for themselves at home and shared it with very few people, they felt free to write whatever they pleased. Both Michelle and Jackie valued privacy in their out-of-school writing. Jackie kept a diary at home which no one else ever read, but she did occasionally show her stories to other people. Michelle exchanged her stories with one friend who lived in another part of the city. She also saw the teacher as a trusted reader of some of her writing and showed it to her for informal rather than formal evaluation: "... I just wanted to show them to see what she thought of them but I don't plan on doing anything with them."

In their school writing, students tended to write for a wider audience. Although Joey saw himself as the primary audience for all his writing, other students saw themselves as writing for the teacher or their classmates in much of their writing. The fact that someone else would read it inhibited some students from writing about private matters at school. Audrey was one who was most inhibited by having someone else read her journal

The journal you have at home you write personal

> things. ...you had to be careful what you put [in the school journal] -- cause if you put 'there's this really cute guy' you can't put stuff like that because she's going to read it. ...if I ever get that [using writing to sort out private matters] I just change the name- like put Sally Jane- but I wouldn't exactly say it was me. I would change some of the things so that she didn't know.

Jackie felt that the school journal was not intended for private writing because of the audience. She saw it more as an assignment: "She reads it and marks you on it. She said not to put stuff like that-- just what you do with your life ...how your weekend was."

The different audiences for school and home writing seemed to also make a difference in the amount and type of revisions the students made. The students who wrote at home often did little with the pieces of writing after the initial draft. They sometimes just left the writing, not showing it to anyone and sometimes not even going back to read it over. There was also little evidence of revision during the writing as there were few changes made on the pages. Michele mentioned that she sometimes proofread her out-of-school writing if someone was going to read it, but said she made few major changes. Jackie was the only one who said she made many changes in her out-of-school writing. In addition, none of the students mentioned the value of revision in helping them sort out what they were trying to say. It was sometimes as if the writing had served its purpose the moment the original thoughts were out of the mind and on the paper and the piece of writing was then forgotten. In fact, Michele saw making changes as taking her away from her original intention.

> I just write it down and don't change anything. because I don't think it can be changed cause when I write it down it just grows out but when I start to change things, it's just not the same so I don't change anything.

The students tended to make quite a few revisions in their school writing, however. A comparison of first and second drafts in one piece of writing from Colin, Michelle, Jackie and Audrey showed that the average length went from twenty-two to twenty-nine T units and they made an average of seventeen major changes. These changes were defined as additions, deletions or changes to content. In addition, students were asked by the teacher at one point, to count major changes to their stories. She defined major changes as adding or deleting a sentence, putting a sentence somewhere else in the story, or changing the meaning of a sentence by adding, deleting or changing words. Students who volunteered answers said they had made many of these changes. Albert had made sixteen and had gone from approximately one quarter of a page to three quarters, Paul had made seventeen and Joey had made twenty-eight.

For most students, having the teacher as an audience didn't seem to overly influence the revisions they made. Although they were aware of the teacher as one audience for much of their writing, they seemed to make revisions to meet their own intentions or for a wider audience rather than simply to please the teacher. While Jackie sometimes saw the teacher as the primary audience and was aware of her input, she considered the changes she made important for any audience:

> At first, I just put down my idea that I have, in case I forget them. After a while I think if I write this down, it's not going to make sense to the person who's reading it. Then I just change it.

She seemed to have a wider unknown audience in her mind as she revised and showed that she was aware that anyone who was reading her writing may not understand it unless she made it more explicit:

> Before I put 'just listening to us' and I thought if I put that maybe you'll think-- give the person a better idea of where we are.... Just in case someone was [reading it], so they'd know what was happening.

In addition, she showed that she sometimes made revisions to suit her own intentions rather than for any audience. She indicated that she was developing a true sense of audience so that the audience for her writing was still in the background but she was beginning to create her own meaning by making changes because she was aware that they needed to be made. She was not just producing them to meet someone else's demands. In discussing why she made changes to a specific piece, she discussed the teacher's input but also discussed making the revisions because she wanted to.

> "She [the teacher] said to put how you felt and I didn't put anything of how I felt. I just put 'I felt scared'. So in this one I wanted to put how I felt and like when you're dying, how you feel-- like when you're scared and stuff.

Audrey also did not see the teacher as the only audience for her school writing. She talked about writing various drafts with the first for herself: "At first you just write and then when she makes us do a second or third copy you're writing for the teacher. That's when you start thinking about it [the audience]."

Audrey also did not think that she needed to make revisions to please the teacher but talked instead about making changes to suit her own intentions:

> You don't have to change it. She just wants you to change it if you want to... I change it if it doesn't make sense, if something doesn't sound right- like it has to sound right to me and if it doesn't, I just change it.

Valerie also talked about making revisions to suit her own intentions. It seemed to be the time lapse between drafts which allowed her to see the need for revisions rather than input from other people: "Well the first time I write I don't have time to think about it, but you go home and think about it and you come back and put in different ideas."

Albert also mentioned making changes because "things didn't make sense" to him, while Paul and Joey both talked about making changes because the writing didn't "sound right" to them.

For a few students, however, having the teacher as an audience was somewhat overwhelming. Jackie sometimes made changes because the teacher would be reading it: "At home it only really has to make sense for you, because if you are not going to let the teacher read it, it won't matter."

Michele saw the teacher as the primary audience for her school writing. "At home you're writing for yourself-- at school you're writing for the teacher." She saw the teacher as the most important reader of her writing because the teacher could see things the other students couldn't or wouldn't:

> The teacher's got more brains than the students-- she'll figure it out-- what makes sense and what doesn't, but the students just don't care' they read it over and give you a comment and hand it back.

Seeing the teacher as the main audience seemed to put some constraints on Michele's school writing as she sometimes felt she had to make changes in response to the teacher's questions and that these changes sometimes led her away from her own intentions:

> Sometimes it's better and sometimes it's worse-- say

> you liked your story in the beginning but then she makes you do another one -- and you have questions and you have to answer them and put them into the story and then you do your third one and there's more questions. Pretty soon it's not the way you wanted it in the beginning because the way the questions were, changed it totally. When you answered the questions so that it made sense, it's totally changed.

Although she could see that some of her original draft would not make sense to an outside reader, she felt that she had to make specific changes to answer the teacher's questions and this was what changed her piece away from her own intentions.

> Well she wanted to know why and it was kind of stupid because I didn't explain it so it would have been confusing-- then when you write the story to make it make sense, it's different... like when she asks you the questions to make more sense, you have to change it... if she wants me to change it, I don't like it because it's not the same as it was before.

Colin also made changes in his writing because of the teacher, sometimes making changes because he was aware of getting marks for them: "That's because if you don't make changes, she takes marks off." He was often satisfied with his first draft and therefore he did not want to make many changes: "Most of the time you just leave it because it is good enough. You get your best ideas at the beginning." He could however, see that these changes sometimes made his writing better."If there's a weak part in the story, it makes it better."

C. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The classroom context matched to a great extent with that which the literature suggested should promote learning to write and writing for learning. The teacher was aware of and used both functions of writing--those of learning and communication. She believed strongly in giving students alternatives and believed that this made them think more as well as helped them to take ownership of their learning. This belief was reflected in her teaching as she used a number of specific strategies to encourage choices. Some of the strategies she used included brainstorming ideas during prewriting and encouraging students to choose one to write about, having them write alternate beginnings to stories and choose the best one, enouraging alternate answers to questions and focussing on alternate ways of constructing sentences. Students were also given the choice of whether or not to share their writing.

Some choice was also given in the forms, topics and purposes for writing although focus was more on variety, which ensured that students wrote in a number of different ways. Choice was thus given as having students choose from several alternatives within a structured assignment.

The teacher also believed in revision as a way of improving writing and used teacher and peer input in order to help students revise their work. Some marks were also given to major changes to content.

Some of the other teacher beliefs included marking students on their performance rather than knowledge about writing, tying writing to relevent student experiences and having students write for various audiences. Strategies were also used which matched these beliefs.

The informants' beliefs and perceptions about writing were quite similar. One of their major perceptions was that they needed a lot of freedom in their writing, particularly in choice of topics. They felt that freedom in topic selection allowed them to develop their own intentions and made the writing easier so it would turn out better. Although all students interviewed felt they needed freedom in order to write, the amount of freedom needed to develop their intentions varied among students. Four of the six informants found more freedom in their out-of-school writing and tended to use this writing for learning. Two students did find enough freedom in school assigned-tasks to use this writing to learn.

Generally the informants saw the purpose of writing as a way of sorting out thoughts and feelings. Three of the students, however, perceived a difference in school writing and saw the purpose of it as mostly a way of recording and processing information and learning content material.

The audience also made a difference in the way the writing was used and in the development of intention. Two of the informants expressed the need for complete privacy in order to use writing to explore private concerns or problems and felt they could not do this type of writing at school. In addition, students seemed to make many more revisions in their school writing than in that which they did at home. While their revisions as such did not seem to influence their use of writing for learning, their perception of who the revisions were for, did make a difference. The two students who felt that they were making revisions to please the teacher saw their writing taking a direction they did not want it to thus losing their own intention.

It is difficult to draw definite conclusions about how the context influenced the way writing was used for learning because writing for learning is influenced by so many factors outside of the immediate context and varies with different writers. However difficult it is to be definite, it does seem likely that this context did influence the writing for learning of some students in various ways. In the first place, the teacher's beliefs about writing and about learning, as well as the thematic focus on dilemmas and some the strategies she used, probably allowed some writing for learning to occur. Since the major perception of the students was that they needed the freedom to do what they wanted in order to use writing for discovery, and the teacher emphasized the idea of choices, it is likely that these strategies allowed some students to develop their own intentions. Her strategy of giving a choice in topics and forms of writing seemed to allow Paul and Joey the freedom to impose their own structure on the assignment and thus take over ownership to use it for their own purposes. Since neither boy wrote on his own outside of the school context, it is possible that neither would have used writing as a way of learning, had he not experienced it in his school writing. Thus, the classroom context contributed directly to this happening.

It is also likely, however, that since so little of the writing examined showed evidence of writing for learning, although an effort was made to set up the best possible situation for it to occur, that the school context inhibited writing for learning. In the first place the way most of the informants used writing for learning did not fit well into a school context. They used it to deal with very private matters when they felt an immediate and urgent need to solve personal problems or to purge powerful feelings. In a school context there is not much privacy, since other students can quite easily see the writing, so many would not feel comfortable opening up to fully explore private concerns in this context. In addition, in this classroom as in many, the teacher read much of the writing and this could further inhibit students from writing about private concerns.

Finally, a school context seldom allows the flexibilty of time to encourage students to write about pressing concerns whenever they feel the need. In this school, as in most junior high schools, the students were in the Language Arts class for only a small part of their day and even while they were in this class, most of their time was taken up by doing tasks which were initiated by the teacher. Therefore, it is unlikely that many students would feel they had the freedom to write about a pressing concern while they were expected to be working on another task. The only time this was observed to happen was when Tanya wrote about a personal problem while the rest of the class was involved in another task, and even she expressed the feeling that she should not be doing this type of thing.

It also seemed that some student's interpretation of the teacher's intentions hindered their use of writing for learning. While it was the teacher's stated intention that students should use their journals to write about whatever they wished, one student felt that they were supposed to use journals to record daily events in their lives. In addition, while the teacher stated that she wanted the students to revise only those pieces of their writing that they wished to, that the final decision to revise was the author's, two students felt that they had to revise to make sure the teacher's questions were answered.

This misinterpretation may have been a result of students' past experiences with journal writing or revising or could also be due to experiences with writing in other classrooms. However, some misinterpretation may also have been because of conflicts among the different goals the teacher had for her students. While she wanted to encourage student ownership and used several strategies to encourage this, she also felt other goals were important and the strategies she used to encourage these may have hindered students' intentions. For example, there may have been a conflict between encouraging student intentions and ensuring the students were exposed to a wide range of writing experiences. While students were always given choices to encourage intention, these were often in the form of alternate topics, forms or purposes to ensure that they had a variety of experiences so that they seldom had a completely free choice. At times some students still felt that there was not enough freedom so that they could not always write on a topic which suited them.

The goal of using the journals as a way of communicating and building relationships with her students may also have been in conflict with students' use of journals for learning. Since they tended to use writing for learning when dealing with very private matters, the fact that the teacher would be freqently reading and responding to the journals would probably discourage these students from using the journals for this purpose. Even though the teacher asked students to make a note if they did not wish her to read certain parts, they still may not have felt comfortable writing privately in this context.

Finally, the teacher's goal of improving the students' writing through revision may have come into conflict with a few students' use of writing for learning. In the first place, while the teacher's emphasis on revision was probably responsible for the extensive revision most students did in her class, and seemed to help some students clarify their writing for an audience, it did not seem to contribute to the way some students were using writing for learning. Many students did make very many revisions to their writing in class but they seemed to see the value of these revisions in clarifying their writing for an audience and not in clarifying thoughts for themselves. On the other hand, the pieces of writing which seemed to contribute most to the students' learning appeared to contain very few revisions, indicating that the writers were not consciously using revision as a strategy to contribute to their learning. While some pieces of writing took the students in new directions, and thus revision in their thinking was taking place, these students did not appear to consciously move bits of information around, add or delete information or choose different words, all of which might lead them to see things differently and thus lead to discovery. Instead, most of the students' learning seemed to occur while they were using the writing to clear their minds and in moving thoughts from the subconscious to the paper where the ideas were in concrete form so that they could discover what these ideas were or could reread the writing and make sense of their thoughts. Simply writing the ideas down seemed to be all that was necessary. The discovery came in the writing of the problem or while they read it over so that it was not necessary to revise the writing to discover further.

In a few cases the encouragement of revision actually hindered the development of the student's own intentions since it seemed to lead a few students to believe that improving their writing was more important than writing the way they wished to. They made the changes suggested by the teacher since they felt it was the best way of improving their writing but as they did so, the ownership of the piece was transferred at least in part from student to teacher. Therefore it appears that the context did influence the students' writing for learning, sometimes by encouraging it and sometimes by inhibiting it.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Although through this study, I have been able to answer some questions I had about what writing for learning looks like and what seems to be important in its occurence, I am still wondering about several issues arising from my investigation and struggling with the implications these may have for teaching. Because I knew from the studies of Britton and others, that very little writing for learning generally occurs in schools, in setting up this study I tried to create the best possible environment to ensure that it did occur so that I would be able to study it. I chose a teacher who I felt would have a classroom environment which promoted the freedom for risk taking that is necessary to the development of student intentions and therefore of learning through writing. We created a unit which would encourage students to use their writing to think through issues. On top of that, we worked together to choose students who seemed interested in writing and committed to the learning activities. I even changed informants during the study, choosing new students who showed more promise of using their writing for learning and I expanded the focus of my study to include writing which took place outside of the classroom. In addition to this, the teacher seemed to be doing all the "right things" which the literature suggested should promote learning through writing. Yet, with all this preparation, the writing for learning which did occur was still a very small part of the total writing which was done.

The first question I am faced with then is, why did so little writing for learning occur, even though I went to such great lengths to find a suitable context? Could we have done more to promote it? Would more writing for learning have occurred, had we created a better unit, or asked better questions, or chosen different literature, or responded to the students differently? If that were the case, it would probably be a relatively simple matter to examine what kinds of changes are necessary in the environment and to recommend that teachers implement these changes in order to promote writing for learning. However, it seems that students' use of writing for this purpose is dependent on so many complex factors, that it is very difficult to foster, no matter how suitable the context. This then leads to a number of other questions about the nature of writing for learning in schools.

A. DO STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD WRITING INTERFERE WITH THEIR USE OF WRITING TO LEARN?

In the first place, student intentions, as Nancy Martin (1976) says, seem to be very fragile. The intention to write and to use writing for the purpose of learning is not something that can be produced in a few weeks or months of encouragement, especially when the teacher is probably attempting to counter student attitudes which have built up over years of relying on the teacher's intentions. If students view the teacher as someone in control of their writing and their learning, it is likely very difficult for them to develop their own intentions, even if the teacher wants them to. It would also be easy to misinterpret the teacher's purposes while trying to please him. For example in this study, some students misinterpreted the teacher's questions to encourage revision, probably because they viewed her as in control of the learning. These students felt that they had to answer the teacher's questions about their writing, even though she had told them numerous times that the final decision on what to revise was the author's. It seems then that sometimes, even when we think we are promoting student intentions, we may be unknowingly hindering them because students have misinterpreted what we mean.

In addition, if we can generalize the findings of Britton(1975) and similar studies, most students are unlikely to have much experience in using writing for the purpose of learning. In fact most of their experience with writing is likely to be in using it to communicate to the teacher what they have learned, usually for the purposes of evaluation. When students are accustomed to writing primarily for the teacher and in order to get marks, it is sometimes difficult to pursuade them to write at all if their writing is not being marked, since they can see no other reason for writing. Under these circumstances, it would be very unusual if a great number of students did use writing for learning in school since it would counter previous experiences of what writing in school is for.

B. ARE JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS DEVELOPMENTALLY READY TO USE THEIR WRITING IN ORDER TO LEARN?

Although students in this study made discoveries as they wrote, I wonder if many junior high students are not yet developmentally ready to use writing for this purpose and that is why writing for learning is so difficult to find. At this age, many students are still not proficient writers, even though we sometimes seem to expect them to write to the standards of adults. Many are moving for the first time from expressive writing toward more communicative functions. Some are still experimenting with different sentence structures by expanding and joining simple sentences. Some are just becoming aware of appropriate use of mechanics and many are trying new forms of writing for the first time. With all of these new experiences, is it any wonder that few students are further experimenting with a new function of writing? Even many adult writers who have sorted out these kinds of issues in their writing and who should find it much easier to use writing in this manner do not do so.

C. DOES WRITING INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS PREVENT WRITING FOR LEARNING FROM OCCURRING?

It is possible that there is something about the way that we teach writing that counteracts its use for learning.

We know that focussing too much on the writing product hinders student intentions, but perhaps the new emphasis on process is just as confining for some students. I began to worry about this after I had asked my own students to write me a short note to tell me about how things had gone for them during the year, what they had enjoyed doing, and what they might do differently. One of my more conscientious students brought her note and asked me to respond so that she could do a final draft. She had come to see the process as something she was supposed to do rather than thinking about why she might make revisions or edit or do a new draft. Perhaps it was because I emphasized the writing process too much and this led her to believe that it was important to do all of the steps at all times, no matter what the purpose or context.

Even though we know that a writer does not always go through a process of drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, I think that we may sometimes force students into going through that process and pressure them to make revisions before they are ready, or before they see a need to because we want them to fit into what we feel is the "proper" writing process. Since we know that this process is suggested by much of the professional literature, and since it seems to make sense in terms of what we have experienced in writing, we adopt it as a method of teaching. When this happens, the process often becomes less a useful way of thinking about writing or a way of helping some students at some times, and more of a prescription which is imposed on all students for all of their writing. The more orthodox the method becomes, the more it lends itself to teachers controlling the writing and therefore the less it encourages the students' own intentions. What may result is that the process and the writing become ours rather than the author's.

Perhaps the way the entire language arts program is dealt with in schools is in opposition to students' use of writing to learn. Since the primary focus of language arts programs is literacy, the content becomes less important than learning to read or to write. Writing for learning therefore makes little sense in this context, since we may legitimately ask, Writing to learn what? If what students learn in language arts classes seems to be of less importance than developing literacy, it is difficult to encourage them to use their writing to learn.

D. ARE THE TOPICS STUDENTS CHOOSE IN THEIR WRITING FOR LEARNING NOT SUITABLE FOR SCHOOL CURRICULA?

It is also possible that students seldom use writing to learn in junior high because the types of issues they are concerned with do not seem to fit into any school curricula. For example, the issues raised in their writing by students in this study such as problems with boyfriends, making friends, or simply dealing with being in a bad mood, are not traditionally dealt with in schools. While schools do have health and guidance programs intended to help students deal with major problems, the types of issues written about by these students don't seem to fit into this category and yet they were vitally important to the students. Is there a place, then, in the school curriculum for these kinds of individual and often very private issues?

The language arts class might actually be the best place to encourage students to do some thinking about such issues. After all, many teachers use journals and encourage their students to write about what is important to them and the teachers respond in the role of a trusted adult. Similarly, it seems that one of the most useful aspects of literature is self-discovery and awareness. These are certainly outcomes that many of us derive from reading literature, just as they are often reasons why authors write. Literature can help us to see important issues in a new way, whether those issues are very private problems, or broader, more intellectual questions.

I am not sure, though, that encouraging the use of reading, writing, talk and viewing in school to deal with these private concerns would work. The problem of lack of privacy in school might mitigate against it. Even though some students in my study had stumbled on the use of writing to solve personal concerns, in their writing outside of school, they did not use their school writing for this purpose, partly because it was not private enough.

In addition to the fact that there are so many people around in a classroom that it is very difficult to keep them from seeing each other's writing, there can be a conflict between the need for privacy and the need to share writing in school. As this study indicates, some students will not open up and take the same risks and write about what is important to them unless they are ensured some privacy in their writing. They need to know that not everything they write is open to public scrutiny, that some of the writing is their exclusive domain, and that they may or may not choose to allow anyone to read it. This problem arises especially in the journal writing students do in school. In most cases, the writing is written for the teacher albeit in the role of a trusted adult rather than an evaluator of the writing. However, even this audience can inhibit some students from writing about what is really on their minds.

On the other hand, sharing is one of the prime motivators for writing so that students need to be given every opportunity to share what they have written, not only with the teacher but also with each other: in pairs, in small groups, with the entire class, or with others outside of the classroom. This emphasis on sharing might lead some students to think that school is not a place for any kind of private writing and therefore not use their writing for this purpose.

Aside from these difficulties, language arts classes probably still could be places where students could attempt to sort out issues of private concerns. However, I am not totally convinced that school is an appropriate place to do this. In the first place, the nature of schools, especially junior highs, seems to lead to learning becoming broken up into parts, with a specific time and often a different teacher for each piece of learning. If students view learning as compartmentalized with specific times for each different type, it could be very difficult for them to make any connections beween their concerns and the type of learning that is supposed to be happening at that particular time. In addition, when all activities are scheduled, it would be very difficult for students to fit their concerns in. How could they write about a concern raised in social studies class if the time for social studies was over or if it was not time for writing?

It also seems that whenever something becomes part of a school curriculum, it becomes ritualized and loses its original value. The original intent of the Silent Sustained Reading Program for example, was to encourage students to read. However, in implementing it, schools were faced with the problem of what to do with students who did not like to read or did not feel like reading at that particular time of the day. Similarly there were decisions to be made about what was acceptable reading material. Should magazines or comics be allowed, or what about reading textbooks, especially if there was an exam next period? What sometimes happened was that rules were made to cover each instance and applied to each student equally so that the program that was originally intended to promote pleasurable reading sometimes became a chore for both students and teachers.

Journal writing in schools often suffers a similar fate. Every student must write at the same time and must show the writing to prove that something is being accomplished. By imposing this sameness on students, a program which is designed to encourage " free" writing becomes something students must do for the teacher and in some cases it actually discourages writing. If we treated a program designed to help students deal with private concerns in this way, it would be worse than useless. Would we force students to have a concern at ten o'clock every morning so they could write about it? If they didn't have concerns, how would we know they were accomplishing or "learning" anything during this time?

E. WOULD A FOCUS ON EXPRESSIVE AND POETIC RATHER THAN TRANSACTIONAL WRITING ENCOURAGE MORE WRITING FOR LEARNING?

This study also led me to wonder whether we focus too much on transactional writing in school. The studies of Britton and others have certainly indicated that this is the predominant mode of writing in many schools. Perhaps it is because adults find this type of writing to be important and can use it for discovery as well as for communicating that society tends to stress it as the most important type of writing. It may be that because schools often reflect this bias that we push students into this type of writing before they are ready and curtail their use of expressive and poetic writing which might be more valuable in their learning. While transactional writing is usually emphasized in junior high, poetic writing is often thought of as a frill. It is sometimes seen as "merely" creative writing which is good for developing creativity but is not all that useful in the real world. In this study, though, poetic writing was more valuable than transactional writing in the learning of at least some of the students. Only one of the students could have been interpreted as moving toward a transactional mode in her writing to solve a problem and she found that it did not work all that well for her. The type of writing these students seemed to find most useful in shaping their learning was expressive writing which was being shaped toward the poetic, particularly poems. Although some pieces of writing had transactional features such as listing arguments and examining both sides of an argument, which seemed to contribute to the students' learning, these pieces of writing were still basically poetic. The students seemed to find poems easier since they could create a piece of writing by simply writing down their thoughts and feelings without attempting to figure them out. They were able in many cases to write without really monitoring what they were writing, and the learning occurred as the writing purged their feelings or as they discovered meaning in reading over their writing. Perhaps poetry is easier because the thinking of some adolescents has not yet developed enough for a logical, sequential, rational type of approach which is more important in transactional writing.

F. DO PRESSURES ON TEACHERS PREVENT THEM FROM ENCOURAGING WRITING FOR LEARNING?

There are a number of pressures on teachers which counteract encouraging writing for learning in their classes. As a teacher, I feel that I should include in my program numerous strategies based on my reading, research, and other sources of professional development. As a result, I sometimes try to do too many things and push my students too hard and perhaps expect too much of them. I'm sure that this kind of pressure on students is not conducive to reflection or experimentation since they feel that they must get all of these tasks done.

I also feel pressure from the public to make sure that my students are learning in ways that are demonstrable. One of the biggest pressures is to make sure students are "good" writers. Theoretically, the goals of writing improvement and writing for learning should reinforce each other since writing improvement should grow out of students writing to real audiences, for their own purposes, about topics which are meaningful to them-- all of which should also encourage writing for learning. To do this, however, means to give students control over their writing and their learning; and while this focus on student ownership means that they have more freedom to experiment and take risks, it also means that their learning may not always go in the direction that teachers, parents, and administrators feel is important. It also means that they may not achieve what we expect them to and so we feel uncomfortable giving up control of their learning.

In addition, as students are allowed to experiment with such aspects as organization, spelling, and sentence structure, their product might actually appear to get worse before they learn what works best. Similarly, fluency might suffer as teachers give up control of topics and students struggle with what to write about since they can no longer rely on the teacher for topics. Teachers, therefore, sometimes feel uncomfortable in encouraging ownership since they might see apparent regression in a curriculum area that the public focusses on.

We seem especially reluctant to give up this control when student work is for a public audience. For example, this year I had my students writing stories which would be placed in the school library, to be read by younger students. Even though the situation should have been all that was needed for my students to see the need for revision and editing, I was still uncomfortable with some of the products, feeling that some students could make them better. In some cases, I intervened and pressured the students to make further changes to the content, style and mechanics of their writing, even though they were satisfied with the original. As I did this, I took over the intention, making responsibility for the writing mine instead of the students'.

Sometimes then, if we stress writing improvement too much, we take over control of the students' learning, which prevents them from using writing for their own purposes. We sometimes specify forms and topics to ensure that students write in these ways, or we encourage them to make changes they do not see the need for, all of which takes away from their choice, hinders intention, and prevents writing for learning.

Another pressure which prevents teachers from allowing students to structure their own learning is the need to follow curriculum and help students meet common standards on school, district, and provincial tests. It is much safer for teachers to control and specify the learning and therefore make sure everything is "covered" if our students must demonstrate that specific skills and content have been learned.

G. WHAT IS THE PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND STRUCTURE?

The last problem I see is that of meeting the different and often conflicting needs of all of our students in their use of writing for learning. While it is sometimes a relatively simple matter to find literature or activities that almost all students can enjoy, this does not appear sufficient to engage them enough to use their writing to learn. What we as teachers must find is a delicate balance in the structure we impose on learning so that students are allowed to develop their own intentions but are still encouraged to risk in their writing what they would not ordinarily try. This balance becomes even more difficult to find because it appears to be quite different for various students. Some students seem to need complete freedom in topic, form, and time to write in order to fully develop their own intentions. If there is not enough freedom, students may do the task but are unable to use it for their own intentions, which means they cannot use it for learning. What may result is empty, voiceless writing which lacks any invlovement on the part of the student and which they just seem to do for the sake of getting it done.

On the other hand, some students have trouble with too much freedom. They lack direction and don't know what to do, possibly because they are used to relying on the teacher for the intention to write. What may result again is empty, voiceless writing or no writing at all.

On top of everything else is the problem of maintaining control. Sometimes the freedom required to promote using writing to learn might lead to a situation where any kind of learning is unlikely. While some students can benefit from this freedom, others simply see it as licence and can cause problems for the rest of the class because they do not have enough to do or enough structure.

Some structuring of learning, then, is necessary; and for some students, it can actually facilitate writing for learning. An assignment can spur students to experiment with new ideas if it meets their needs and if they are given enough freedom to take over ownership of the task assigned to them. This is what happened with two of the students in my study. There seemed to be the right balance for them of freedom and structure so that they could adapt the task for their own purposes and use their writing in order to discover. It seems, then, that although we must continue to structure some of the learning by assigning some tasks to nudge students into new experiences, we must also be aware of giving as much choice as possible within the tasks in order to allow students to develop their own intentions.

H. FINAL REFLECTIONS

In this chapter I have discussed some of the difficulties which arise when we try to encourage students to use their writing in order to learn in school. I do not, however, intend to suggest that the task is impossible. In my own class, for the past few years, I have consciously attempted to help my students use their writing for the purpose of learning. I tried to give them more freedom to structure their own learning and to give them more privacy to explore issues that were important to them. In journal writing, for example, I have encouraged my students to take the initiative in deciding what to write about and have emphasized that students choose what to share with me or with each other. Not all of their writing is for sharing. At the same time I have encouraged volunteers to read aloud what they have written, and to share their writing in pairs so that they could take their cues and receive the impetus to write from one another rather than from me. I also attempted to make my students' learning in school relevent to their own lives by letting them take the lead in initiating discussion or writing about issues that were important to them.

While I have stuggled with trying to find appropriate balances between freedom and structure and between the need to share and the need for privacy, I have been able to see some of my students, at times, using their writing in order to learn. It seemed to happen most when I enouraged students to write about a number of events in their lives and to choose a few of these to create an autobiography, and when I encouraged them to respond in writing to literature by exploring their thoughts and feelings about the characters and issues arising from a story, or telling about experiences they had which were similar.

I think it is necessary to realize though that this writing for learning that occurred was very sporadic, sometimes happening when I least expected it and sometimes not happening when I thought it would. Writing for learning is not something that can be forced and with all the circumstances that may mitigate against it, we cannot expect too much of our students or ourselves by expecting it to happen for all students at all times or when we "will" it to happen.

While attempting to promote students' writing for learning can be very discouraging since it sometimes seems that our best efforts are either in vain or are actually inhibiting our students from using writing in this manner, I think teachers can have a role to play. The best we can probably do is to create a suitable and workable environment in order to encourage writing for learning. The key is probably recognizing when writing is tapping a genuine concern on the part of students and accept it, even if it does not accomplish what we expect, or does not fulfull the "assignment." We need to try to ignore the pressures that are put on us to take short cuts in improving our students writing by taking over the ownership and forcing them to do what we see as valuable. If we truly want them to improve their writing, they must see the value in doing this. It is not something we can force on them. In other words, we can not give them the power to develop their own intentions, but we may allow them to take it by not pushing them too hard or too fast.

I think we also need to realize that the magic in teaching lies less in the strategies and methodology than it does in the rapport we have with our students. Ironically, the time when I felt most effective as a teacher was in my role of researcher for this study. I did not worry about what methods were most effective in helping the students learn, and didn't have to worry about evaluating them or about reporting on how well they were doing. Instead, I could talk to the students about what was really concerning them, find out what was working for them and encourage them to extend what they were doing. I was able to gain their trust in a way that I never could as a teacher since I was able to find the time to discover their real concerns and could respond to their writing in a way that demonstrated this. If I could now find the flexibility in my various teacher roles of evaluator, parent substitute, reporter and even policeman and focus more on the role of trusted adult, as I did in my role as a researcher, I am sure that I could better promote writing for learning among my students.

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